



## **How Does the Atonement of Jesus Christ Help Those I Lead Today? | An Interview with B.J. Allen**

October 12, 2024

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

and subscribe. All right, we're back for another episode of the Leading Saints podcast. I'm excited to welcome in B.J. Allen to the studio here. He recently wrote a book called *The Compensating Power of Christ*, subtitled *Brings a Punch, How Christ's Atonement Rights the Wrongs of an Unfair World and Imperfect People*. I love just the concept, obviously the atonement of Jesus Christ is at the center of all of our theology, but really like how does it work? I mean, I can maybe draw on a chalkboard how it works and why it works or how it should work, but what if I'm really going through a difficult time and church leaders know that you face those people who are just in mortality, in the thick of it. They don't know what to do next. And how do we encourage them on the path and help them leverage the power of the atonement of Jesus Christ to face another day? And so BJ does a phenomenal job. He's also currently serving as a bishop. So we talk a lot about the context of how he does this and his leadership. Even in particularly with repentance, like it's sometimes you get caught up in the details, the behaviors, the relapses. But how can we really help somebody through the repentance process so they stay engaged in the gospel and keep leaning on Jesus Christ? So here's my interview with B.J. Allen. B.J. Allen, welcome to the Leading Saints podcast. Thank you. I'm excited to be here. Now, I've got a copy of your book and then you spoke at Education Week and some of my family members were at your class and they kept talking about your class. And this sounds like a guy I need to get on the podcast. And here we are. Well, thank you. Thank you.

BJ Allen:

I mean, I'm a big fan of your show and it's really just an honor to be here. Well, thanks.

Kurt Francom:

Now you're in the show. I had to stop you, you were telling me a story about how this book came to be. By the way, it's *The Compensating Power of Christ, How Christ's Atonement Rights the Wrongs of an Unfair World and Imperfect People*. So tell me, like, where did the beginning of the story happen for which led to the book?

BJ Allen:

Yeah. So, you know, we all have questions about the imperfections of life and why is life unfair? And there's this beautiful line in *Preach My Gospel* under the section of the atonement that says all that is unfair about life can be made right through the atonement of Jesus Christ. And I've always loved that. And one day when I was reading it, I just kind of came to me and I was like, I don't think I really know what that means. I realized it more as like an abstract saying than like a concrete doctrine. And so I kind of just made it like a multi-year study and just really trying to understand how does Christ make right the unfairness of life and how does he help us overcome weaknesses. And because I'm an academic and we're weird, I wrote, I put it all

together. I started kind of writing it and I just felt really strongly prompted to put it into a book. And I thought, no, I'm not going to do that. Like I've never written a book and no one will care about it or whatever. And I did because you just follow promptings because that's what you do. And I wrote and I sent it in, I thought I'll just send it in and they'll say no and then I can tell God like I did my part, right? And just the opposite happened, right? They accepted it and it's been fun to talk about it with other people and you know, to talk at Education Week and stuff about it because I just see how healing, healing the compensating power is for people to realize like Christ has been with me even in the difficult times and he's blessing me not just in the afterlife but in the here and now.

Kurt Francom:

Where does it begin? Because you're a marketing professor at BYU. You're not, you know, church history, doctrine guy at BYU, but you're still a smart guy.

BJ Allen:

Yeah, to write this book. So, the book is really about how Christ compensates for the unfairness, the injustice, and the weaknesses of life. And there's a lot of difficulties and things we go through in our life where we're going to say, like, that's not fair. Or where other people may go through something that's not fair. And what I found as I talked to individuals is that most of our questions revolve around this kind of perceived gap between the beauty of the gospel and the harsh realities of life. And what the book is about is about how Christ bridges that gap. Like we talk about how Christ bridges the gap of physical death and sin, but like wouldn't it make sense that Christ bridges all the gaps? And in our lives, these could be really big gap questions, like why does God let bad things happen to good people? What about people who are born in third world countries who don't have the same opportunities that I do? Or it could be small gaps like, man, I love the gospel teachings, but when I go to church, I feel judged or I don't feel like I belong. And the message of the book is that Jesus Christ compensates for all that's unfair and weakness about life. And really, the goal is to help people see how Christ is a bigger part of their daily life than they often think.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And because I appreciate that, that I often, you know, I often highlight the dynamic of the gospel experience of a lot of us understand what Christ does for us in the eternities, but we don't really understand what he's doing for us today. And today can be really hard. And we don't understand that, like, it's going to be a really hard day. So we really need Christ today, not only in the eternities. Right.

BJ Allen:

That's a beautiful way of saying it. And as I wrote the book, it really was a paradigm shift for me in the way I thought about the atonement because I always knew that like Christ would take into account the difficulties of life and give them maybe like a more merciful judgment in the next life and we'd be compensated for the difficulties. But I never really thought about how he does that in the here and now. and how he offers compensatory blessings now, how he offers more merciful judgment now, how he's in our lives intricate in every aspect we're doing. Whether that's we're a leader and we're trying to do our best but we're just imperfect and we're messing up or whether that's I'm going through a really difficult time. but I live in a fallen world and some of it's not my fault and Jesus Christ is compensating us in the day to day. Yeah, I love how you said that.

Kurt Francom:

And another thing I'll highlight is you're also currently a bishop, right? So you're in that context of like, you know, the judge in Israel and you know, people coming to you to repent, quote unquote, right? And a lot of bishops, I know I was one of these sort of, you get thrown into this dynamic and you're like, what am I supposed to do here? Like, I feel like I should know what to do. And so we default to maybe some old traditions and approaches that aren't as encouraging, or maybe they're more shaming than redemptive. And we get stuck in it. Right. So when we talk about like compensating power of Christ, like, is this maybe there's not a way to say, but are you looking at like the mechanics of the atonement of Jesus Christ? Like, how does this work exactly? Or how would you say?

BJ Allen:

Yeah, yeah, that's a great question. One of the earlier chapters of the book talks about the different applications of the atonement we typically talk about in the church. So Christ, you know, the resurrecting power, the forgiving power, the healing power, the strengthening power. And then I just proposed there's this other application that we don't often think about and that's what I call the compensating power. And I use the word compensating because that's what it is. It offers recompense. for the imperfections and the difficulties that we go through in life. And I think maybe the best way to talk about it from a high-level perspective is really the meat of the book is three different ways that Christ compensates. And one of those is how Christ compensates us for our own imperfections. That could be how he helps me overcome my weaknesses, how he helps me increase my faith and he makes my faith sufficient. even when it may not be that big or when I'm going through a faith crisis. And then the second way we talk about it is how Christ compensates others for our imperfections. So that could be, you know, I accidentally hurt someone's feelings or I'm trying to repent of something I did and it impacted

people negatively. Like how does Christ compensate them beyond what I can do? And also, how does Christ compensate others under my stewardship, whether I'm a parent or I'm a bishop, you know, and how does Christ take into account my own weaknesses and make my efforts sufficient to bless those people beyond what I can do on my own. And then the third way it talks about is how Christ compensates us for the difficulties and just the randomness of life. Like the things that are just imperfect that happen to living in a fallen world where we would say, that's just not fair. And what is the role of Christ in bridging that gap and how does he help us both move on and feel like we're not being treated unfairly?

Kurt Francom:

Cause the typical response, you know, and people sort of characterize this where it's like, yeah, I go to my bishop or I go to my parents and they just tell me, read the scriptures more and pray more. Right. And, and the other side as leaders were like, I don't know what else to say. Like, that's what I do. You know? And so sometimes it's hard to be like, yeah, we're in, I appreciate the emphasis on applications. Like, We sometimes understand the theology of the atonement of Jesus Christ, but I don't know what to do with it on a Tuesday afternoon when, when tragedy hits. Right.

BJ Allen:

Or it's just a hard day at work. Right. Absolutely. And I fear sometimes that we talk about the atonement of Jesus Christ in so like in abstraction that it just becomes like this, like theoretical concept, right? It's like this construct that's like one day I'll understand it.

Kurt Francom:

I often refer to like in a Star Wars context, it's the force, right? Nobody knows how the force works, but use the force, Luke. And I appreciate the recent emphasis from President Nelson and others of like, this isn't the atonement. This is the atonement of Jesus Christ. Because sometimes we throw out that, well, just use the force, BJ. Okay, like do I do this thing? Like how does that work, right?

BJ Allen:

Yeah, exactly. And that's why I think it's so important that we talk about how like the Atonement in concrete ways. Like the Atonement can help you do this and this is how. And there's sometimes, you know, maybe an ancillary negative impact if we talk about the Atonement and

just, you know, well, it helps you forgive a sin and it helps you strengthen and it helps heal you because then maybe we miss kind of the atonement together, like the togetherness of what it does. But if we never talk about the different ways to apply it, then we risk the atonement feeling like this like abstract construct that we'll never understand.

Kurt Francom:

That we can't turn to. It's too abstract. Exactly. So where's a good jumping off point with that? Like, especially from a leadership standpoint, how do we help people understand how to apply the atonement? Yeah.

BJ Allen:

Maybe like, let me give you kind of a, an application story here. And, uh, I mean, I'll change some of the details. So to keep it anonymous, but I was like, I'm in my Bishop's office and I'm talking to someone and this individual he's having, I don't know if I'd call it a faith crisis, but he's, his faith in Christ is kind of withering and he just doesn't feel like the atonement's working for him. And just some very difficult things that had happened in his life and divorce and emotionally abusive spouse and the kids who left the faith. And as I talked to him, like two things became really evident. One was that he just felt like life had treated him unfairly, like the decisions of others, a lot of things beyond his control. It just didn't make any sense to him why God would let these things happen. And secondly, is that he felt like a Christian imposter. Like, I go to church and my life's not like the lives of other people that I perceive a Christian's life should be. And, you know, you talked about, you know, being a bishop and sitting there and you always just think your bishop has all the answers, right? And I'm sitting there and I'm wondering like, what do I say in this situation? Because in the back of my head, I'm like, yeah, like, man, life's really been unfair to you. And I just had like this distinct prompting that just told me that said like, I've been in his life a lot more than you think. And I just felt to testify to him that God was a bigger part of his life than he thought. That he understood his difficulties and he understood that some of the things that were going on in his life were not his fault. And that he was being compensated for those things both in the here and the now. And in trying to understand that he's receiving compensatory blessings, like maybe blessings beyond the things that he's earned as recompense for the difficulties that had occurred. but also that he was receiving a merciful judgment both in the here and in the final, because a lot of the things that were happening were in his fault. And I've had similar situations since then as I've talked to individuals, whether that's marriage problems or sin or a faith crisis. And if I could really like summarize it into one term, it would be this is that the parts of our life that are broken because of sin can be redeemed through repentance and the part that are broken that are not our fault would be redeemed by Christ compensating power. And as I've counseled with people about that, you see just kind of like a hope and a healing come to them when they realize like I felt alone but I'm not really alone. I always knew that God understood my situation, but now I understand that he's doing

something about it. And for people to understand that the atonement works in a number of different ways and that that's one of those ways, I found it very personally meaningful and as well as those people I've talked to.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's a really helpful example because I think the natural response to that when somebody, especially as a church leader, you're witnessing someone who's having a really hard time, we want to take it all away. We want to fix it. You know, let me talk to your wife or, you know, let me, let's see if we can get you a better job or, you know, whatever it is. When in reality, most people want to be, you know, you said maybe a different way, but they want their situations to be witnessed. Like, wow, that hurts. I bet. I'm so sorry. Right. Or you mentioned just this understanding that a divine being understands what I'm going through. Again, not that it suddenly vanishes, but it's like, okay, maybe I can do tomorrow. Right. And then that's, it's beautiful how it works that way.

BJ Allen:

Yeah, exactly. And I think one of the things that's important to understand, you know, about the compensating power is that the role of Jesus Christ is to help overcome the effects of the fall, right? Is that none of us asked, right, for the difficulties that happen in our life. And life is a paradox because The fall of Adam and Eve allows us to learn and to grow and develop Christ-like attributes and be redeemed. But at the same time, the fall of Adam and Eve brings disease and divorce and natural disasters and difficulties. So, like, it's very paradoxical, right? It's like the path that's leading us to God is also keeping us from him. And I think it's important that people understand that the role of Jesus Christ is to help in all circumstances, right? And that could be my own personal weaknesses, but also like the difficulties of others. And as Christ helps us overcome the effects of the fall, again, whether that's our personal weaknesses or the difficulties that occur in our lives, we start to see that he's a bigger part of our life than we think. I bet if you look back at some really difficult times in your life, whether that's the death of a loved one or mental health struggles or whatever, you would be able to see blessings come in other parts of your life where you're like, wow, at least in hindsight, I see God was really with me. I didn't see it at the moment and I felt alone and sometimes I felt abandoned, but man, he was with me. This part of my life was really good and I received a lot of blessings that I really didn't deserve. And you could say, well, like BJ, like what's the role of the atonement in that? Like maybe God's just blessing you because he feels bad for you. And I think about, you know, in Alma 42, when Alma's son Corianton asked a very similar question, like, well, why can't God just forgive us and let us move on, right? And he teaches them with the law of justice and the law of mercy. And essentially just tells them like the law of justice says that you get what you deserve, whether that's good or bad. And then he says, right, that it's the atonement that appeases the mans of justice that allows God to give us mercy. And I bet if we were honest with ourselves, we

would say like a very little of what we have in our life we deserve, right? It's not because my own personal obedience or the things that I've done, it's because I'm trying and because the atonement allows God to apply mercy even when I don't deserve it.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And it's so encouraging to hear that. So what would you say like, like, I'm just, I don't want to over prescribe things or like, this is the five step process that BJ is revealing to us. But if we find ourself in that place where it's like, well, maybe you should just pray more. Have you tried that? Right. What I'm hearing is like, you're witnessing that Christ exists and you're witnessing that their pain is real and that we're in mortality, that Adam did fall and look where we're at. And you're witnessing that there is, you know, that it hurts. I mentioned that. Is there anything else you would say? Like when I'm in that moment, BJ, like, and I need to draw upon the powers of the atonement, both either for me personally or for somebody I love and care about. Anything else you could guide us towards?

BJ Allen:

Yeah. Yeah. Great question. So I think another application of the compensating power is when we think about our own weaknesses and how they impact our relationship with God. And for example, as I'm counseling with people who are going through like a faith crisis, A couple things I've learned is that one is they almost feel like because they can have a doubt, because maybe I'm doubting that maybe that means it's not real. Just the fact that I can doubt something I used to think was true. if I am doubting and there is a God, surely he must be disappointed in me because I used to have a testimony and now I don't. And I think of the story of the father who brings his son to Christ and he says, you know, heal my son. And Christ says, all things are possible to him that believeth. You remember the reply Well, I believe help down my unbelief and I never really thought about like this until I started writing this book, but to me like that's a beautiful application of Christ compensating power is this man understood that he didn't have the faith sufficient that he needed. He says like, I believe help down my unbelief, like I don't have the faith that I need to heal my son, but I know that you can help me. And Christ doesn't say, well, you know, go read your scriptures and go to the temple some more and come back when your faith is stronger. Until you have it, right? Yeah. He says, okay, and he heals his son. And I think for me, like that's such a beautiful application of the way that Christ can compensate all the things in our lives. is you don't have to have perfect faith to start exercising the faith you have now. You don't have to be perfectly obedient to start exercising whatever level of obedience you can. And not just will Christ help you increase your faith, but he gives you the faith or he makes it sufficient to give you the miracles that you need today. And like I've seen that in my life and I've seen that in the people that I've worked with. So that's just the application in terms of like faith, but you can apply it to all the things we do in our lives. Like we do very little things perfectly and Christ isn't just waiting until you learn to do that to then help you as he's



with you through the whole process. And I think it's such a salient example of the scripture in 2nd Corinthians where Christ says, you know, my grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness. Is his grace is sufficient to overcome our weaknesses and his compensating power allows us to receive his blessings and things we need today, even when we don't deserve Them.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And those that compensation is found in some throughout the scriptures, right? you were never, that father was never meant to have everything that that boy needed. The disciples were never meant to have enough food for the 5,000 because it, it was, he was always supposed to be the source. Right. And so that's another framing that I appreciate, like in that context of leading someone and helping somebody is that you have to realize that you were never meant to not need help. Right. God created you to be rely on him. Right. There's a C.S. Lewis quote that said like cars need gasoline. We need Jesus. Like that's how our machine works is on those things. And that's really encouraging because I often hear it discussed in the context of parenting where parents in hindsight, look at their kids. Maybe they've stepped away and it's like, what more could I have done? Right. Or, you know, whatever it is, or they recognize the weakness they had, but when in reality, they were never meant to be their father or mother. It was always Jesus who was meant to be their father, right?

BJ Allen:

To rely on them. Yeah. It's powerful. He's not a reluctant Messiah.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah.

BJ Allen:

He's not like, all right, Kurt, like, I guess I'll help you. He knows we're supposed to. I love the analogy of teaching a kid to ride a bike, is that when I taught my kids to ride a bike, the first thing I had to do was I had to put them on the bike, I had to show them how to do it, I had to hold their seat so they don't fall. But I'm not mad at them that I have to do those things, because I understand it's part of their developmental process. I want them eventually to be able to learn to ride a bike on their own, but I'm there compensating their efforts as they learn to do it so they can eventually do it on their own. But if I'm not there compensating them, they'll never get to the

point where they can do it. Christ isn't a reluctant Messiah. He's not there, all right, I got to help you again. He wants to help us and that's why he came down to earth and that's why he performed the atonement.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Tell me more about the concept of unfairness, because I think people will go there of like, I get it, like crisis there, but like, why is this so hard? Like in other, it's not hard for other people and. As I've sort of tried to monitor and just observe the faith struggles that many different people go through, even those who've maybe gone as far to lose their faith and become very cynical towards the gospel of the church, I often find their arguments always come back to, well, that's not fair or it's suffering. Like I can't reconcile the suffering in the world, so therefore, why would God allow that, right? And I think this is a really important part of our discipleship journey is how do we reconcile unfairness and suffering? And anything that we haven't said or you haven't said on that?

BJ Allen:

So I think part of the understanding of that reconciliation is just understanding the role that like the weaknesses and the unfairness of life play in just the plan of salvation. And to illustrate this, I love – I'm going to adopt an analogy from C.S. Lewis from – I can't remember if it's mere Christianity or a problem with pain, where he talks about how like life is like a chess game. He says like, when I sit down, you know, if you sit down to play – to teach your kid how to play chess, you may stop him a few times when he's about to make a bad move. You may even let him do some illegal moves as he learns. But if you never let the game play out, he's never actually going to learn how to play chess. And you could even say you're doing a detriment to him because you're trying to give him a lack of an understanding of what chess really is. Similarly, so he compares it to life as he says like, you know, if God intervened every time anything happened, we're not actually living a mortal experience. And in fact, there would be no point to sending us down here in the first place. And I'm not saying we have to pretend like suffering is fun and that we like it or even that God wants it to happen, but that God sometimes just has to let the game of chess play out and let us learn from our mistakes. So that doesn't mean, again, that it has to be enjoyable. But when we look at like the eternities, and I think this is part of what President Nelson means when he says that, you know, think celestial, you know, in Joseph Smith and the lectures on faith says that the past, present, future are in word to God, one eternal now is like to you, you see a very little sliver of what's happening and we say, oh, that's really unfair. Like surely God doesn't love me because this little sliver of the eternal timeline is not going the way I want it to. Where if we're willing to think celestial, think about what lies ahead and also the way that Christ is compensating us in the here and now, we all of a sudden realize that like life's a lot more fair than we normally think, right? If I was to steal that tablet from you, and you would say, well, that's not fair that I stole that tablet. It was yours and I

took it. But what if I came by the next week and I returned it and I gave you a million dollars for it? Was it unfair that I took it? Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

But now it's unfair the other way. You paid a million dollars for it.

BJ Allen:

Do you feel well compensated for what happened? Right? And so I'm not saying we have to pretend that the unfairness and the justice of life is enjoyable. Like it's okay to feel hurt and it's okay to feel angry. And I've talked to people who have had really bad things happen in their life. And I've told them that like, God's not mad at you that you feel angry. Like this is a natural part of the grieving process. But it gives hope and healing when we realize how involved in our life Christ is and that we're being compensated both in the here and now. So how does that compensation happen? I think one way it happens is in compensatory blessings. And I've really seen that. We talked a little bit about that. I've seen that happen in my life and the lives of other people. And in hindsight, we can often see the things that occur. And in doing that, Christ compensates for the things that really are in our fault. And one of my favorite parables is labors in the vineyard, where at the end, so for the viewer to help remind you, the master of the vineyard goes to the marketplace like three or four different times to get different workers. And they work at different intervals, but then at the end of the day, they all get paid the same. And some of the people were like, well, how's that fair? But there's a line at the end when the master of the vineyard goes the last time and he asks them, why are you not working? And the people say, we've tried, we've tried to find a job. And I think the word is like, no one hires us. So, in the end of the day, the master of the vineyard compensated them for something they couldn't do. It was out of their control. Yeah. Maybe they could have marketed themselves better. Maybe they could have gone to a different place in the marketplace. But in the end, they tried their best and the master of the vineyard compensated for what they couldn't do. So I think that's one of the ways is compensatory blessings. We talked a little bit about, I think, merciful, more merciful judgment. Like God takes into account the difficulties in your life. And going back to C.S. Lewis, this is from Mere Christianity. He talks about how God looks at judgment a lot different than we do. And he says, you know, God looks both at our raw material, like the things we've been given, our circumstances, and what we do with the raw material. And he says, you know, we only see like the decisions that people make. But we don't see all the raw material, the wind of that decision, your upbringing, the things your parents taught you, your circumstances, your socioeconomic status. And what I find so comforting is that because of the atonement, God can take everything into account and the law of justice is appeased and then Christ can apply his mercy in those standpoints.

Kurt Francom:

My mind goes to, I think of like the parent who has this expectation that their son or daughter goes on a mission. And then for whatever reason, that doesn't happen. And in those, that moment, it feels like a huge letdown. Something went wrong. We didn't do family scripture study enough. Like if we could only go back time and compensate. Right. But then you see that child maybe is away from the church for years. And yeah. I know this is a paradox almost that I almost wonder, and I don't know, but I wonder if God almost, it's hard to say. I don't want to get me in trouble, but here we go. like God almost wants that person to step away from the church for a time. Cause there's almost like this, I need a gap in your mortal experience that I can fill. And right now, if you're doing, if you're checking all the boxes, doing something, you know, you, you can't, there's no place for me today. And I need a place, you know, Jesus today. So you go wander for 10 years, and I'm going to be there with you the whole time. And then that child is 30, 35, gets married, and now is looking into the eyes of a young boy or girl that they're raising. And they're thinking, I need God. And so then they come back, the sealing in the temple happens, all these things happen that could have happened. And it's still just as beautiful as if they went on on the mission and did all the things, right? And I think the temptation in all this is when we try and correct the unfairness, right? Like, no, no, you need to do these things because it's going to be unfair or we need to orchestrate something so it is fair because you're right, it is unfair. When in reality, that's never our job.

BJ Allen:

We feel like it all relies on us. Yeah. Actually, can we talk about that for a second?

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, let's go on.

BJ Allen:

Because what you described is exactly a story that I tell in the book. when I was asked to give a Mother's Day talk. And... This dangerous ground. I know. Well, here's the thing is, this had never really occurred to me that a lot of moms don't like Mother's Day talks until I was at my mom's house for a family dinner. I have nine siblings. And so, I have a lot of sisters who are married and have kids. And they were talking about how they don't like Mother's Day talks because it makes them feel, you know, what we call in popular culture, mom guilt. You know, because people are giving the talk and talking about how great moms are and my mom's so great. We did family home evening, you know, she taught me how to pray and all the moms in the congregation are like, that's not me. I'm not that great. I'm not that good. And, you know, I guess

it didn't occur to like us as dads because we're just kind of oblivious, right? Someone's giving a Father's Day talk, we're like, yeah, that's me, I'm awesome. Right? And so anyway, so I was asked, so when I was asked to give the talk, you know, this conversation with my sisters is ringing in the back of my mind. So I decided instead to talk about how Christ essentially compensates moms and fathers as they give their best effort. And you actually brought the story up, but the story of feeding the 5,000, that's the example I use, is I had always thought about that story in terms of like, you know, if you give God everything you have, he gives you more in return because you give him five loaves and two fishes and they have 10 baskets full after. But it wasn't until I became a leader that like I really saw that as an example of Christ compensating your power. Because if you think about it from the perspective of the apostles and the boy, Christ is like, hey, I need you to feed these 5,000 people. And they're like, well, we can't. We literally don't have the resources to do so. Christ says, well, what do you got? And they say, I got five loaves and two fishes. And he's like, that's good enough. And anyway, so the application I shared was that even though you may not only feel like you have the five loaves and two fishes is that Christ makes your efforts sufficient. Again, going back to that scripture in 2nd Corinthians, like my strength is made perfect in weakness. And I just shared that like Christ is parenting with you, he's helping you, he wants to bless your children more than you do. And as you give your best effort, like this is the very core of the Atonement is to bridge the gap between what you can do and what your kids need. And after I gave the talk, you know, I had a mom come up to me and say, an older woman and just say like, I've harbored guilt for a really long time because my kids left the faith. And today I learned that because I gave my best effort like Christ compensated what I couldn't do. And I just thought like people need to know about this. Like they need to know that like part of the atonement is to make your efforts sufficient in everything that you do. And I think about like one of the most examples for me is as a dad because I try really hard but I'm like a very mediocre faTher.

Kurt Francom:

Oh, come on, bring his family in here. We got to know.

BJ Allen:

Like this may sound brash, but would my kids be better off with Elder Holland as their dad or as President Nelson? Like surely he could teach the gospel to them better and surely he could do a better job. Or as I talked to like young moms, they're just having kids and maybe they didn't grow up in the church or. They feel like, you know, there's a time in their teenage years where they kind of wandered and they come back and they're like, how am I supposed to teach my kids the gospel? I don't even know it myself. Like, are my kids at a disadvantage because they're being raised by me? And again, like it's just, this is the very core of the Atonement's doctrine is that it's made to bridge the gaps. Like I often share with them in second Nephi where

he says that the weakness of their words will I make strong in their faith. Like he's going to be the one that teaches them beyond what you can do.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Yeah. And that's a powerful and there's so many directions I can go, but like the flip side of that experience can be a temptation of itself where we maybe we are that parent where our kids turned out and they're rocking and doing the gospel thing and we can think, Yeah, that's because we did A, B, and C, like, no, no, no, it was never you. It was always Jesus, right? And that's the, I mean, that's a whole nother sort of attached dynamic there. But then with this, you know, as you're sitting in that bishop's office and to testify to someone, what you have done is enough, right? The two lows, five fishes, whatever, it's like, that's enough. You did it. But then it's easy to look back and be like, no, no, no, but the math doesn't add up. The pain's still there. The deficit is still in my life. But like, no, it's a long game here, right? Like God will compensate. And it's beautiful because it draws us to Him in relationship.

BJ Allen:

And it may not happen at the timing you want, but again, like it's a very small sliver of the unfairness that we see and the eternities is a very long time. And God has told us in the scriptures and through prophets that part of the role of the atonement is to bridge that gap. And so, like you were saying, but the deficit's still there and my kid's still not in the church. Like, what are you going to do about it? Very little because you're not perfect and you're weak. But there is one person who can and he's already paid the price for it.

Kurt Francom:

And this is the paradox in it as well. Like I think back, like the first six to nine months of my mission was just really hard for me. And in the moment, I'm like, it's a sliver of unfairness of like suffering. Like, why do you do this to me? But like in hindsight, if God was coming to me and be like, Hey, let's go back in time and see what you're going through. And I don't see like, give it to him double, like give me double as worse. Cause I just now with hindsight, I'm just like, that was so refining. Like I am a better disciple because of it. But in the, in the sliver moment, you don't see it. Right. So to help people, and again, not, we're not doing this to like, just have a bigger picture. Now, isn't that better? Because it does hurt in the moment, but to have that, to me, it stimulates faith of being like, I feel confident saying that I don't know how this works out, but it works out. And to have that confidence as a leader to testify to someone is powerful, powerful position to be in.

BJ Allen:

I love the way you said that, it stimulates faith to be able to say, I know that Christ is going to be with me, I know he's with me now. And I think about the scripture in Isaiah where it says that Christ gives us beauty for ashes. Like what a paradoxical statement is that like the ashes of our lives, the burnings of things that are difficult turn into something beautiful. And it's only Christ who could take bad inputs, like an imperfect life in a fallen world and make the output good. And that's kind of the part that we need to appreciate more is understanding like that Christ can be with me, right? And I think about The talk Elder Holland gave at BYU years ago, Lessons from Liberty Jail, where he says that every circumstance can be a refining circumstance, just like Liberty Jail eventually became a temple for Joseph Smith. And in the moment, Joseph Smith was like, where are thou God and where's the pavilion? Where's your hiding place? But in hindsight, he was able to look back and say like, wow, Christ was with me during that time. I received some of the most beautiful revelations and closeness to God that I had experienced in my life.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's powerful, powerful words. Take us to let's talk repentance for a minute, maybe for the last section of our conversation. You know, often bishops see this dynamic and they're trying to facilitate it. Because and it goes like we've sort of talked in context when life is hard when life is unfair. You know, the cancer diagnosis, the trial, tribulation, the abuse. But then someone gets to a place like, no, no, no. The reason life is hard, it's because of what I did. Right? Like, this is my fault. I own it. And they have such a hard time letting it go on that altar in the bishop's office being like, now it's Jesus, right? It belongs to Jesus Christ now. So, like, what are we doing in repentance? What's compensating? Is it, do I need to suffer long enough so that, you know, I thought he suffered or, you know, what, what comes to mind when in the context of repentance? Yeah.

BJ Allen:

So, I'll say, first of all, I don't know. Okay. And I don't think, I don't think anybody knows. Right. I don't know where the line is between our part and Christ's part and when am I forgiven, right? Because when I forgive someone on behalf of the church for a sin, I don't know if Christ has already forgiven them. I don't know if they're going to be forgiven in the future, right? That repentance and that forgiveness doesn't come from your bishop. But in helping people repent to see that the reason that we're asking you to repent is because the role of the atonement is to try and make you better. And you can be clean from your sins through repentance and Christ will forgive you and make you clean. But Christ didn't just die for you to make you clean. Christ died for you to help you become something great. So what he expects of you isn't to suffer, he doesn't expect you to feel bad for the rest of your life for what he did. All he wants from you is to

walk out that door and to say today I'm going to be better than I was yesterday and I'm going to eventually become temple worthy and I'm going to go to the temple and I'm going to read my scriptures every day and I'm going to come to church and I'm going to serve and I'm going to be a good minister and I'm going to allow the atonement to work with me because the purpose of it is to be better. All right, so that's why we ask you to repent is because that what enables you to fulfill the purpose of the atonement which is to become like our Heavenly FaTher.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's powerful. And because there is the, you know, to witness to somebody that whatever you've done, whatever gap or deficit you've created by your choice, it's already filled, already compensated for how can we get better, right? How can we engage in the covenant once again and improve and become more like him, right? Yeah. That's much more of a hopeful framing than, I mean, come on, don't do this again, right? I don't know. It's just, and it's, it's tough, but.

BJ Allen:

Yeah, like going back to our analogy earlier of riding a bike, like if you fall off the bike, as a dad, you're not like, well, all right, we'll go ahead and walk on the concrete with just your knees as a punishment and then come back, right? All I want you to do is get back on the bike. I'm going to help you, right? And that's what repentance is. It's not a punishment, right? It's a refining process.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And it's been helpful. The handbook's very much. clear on that, that there's no punishment happening here. That was already taken care of, you know. So anything else with repentance or anything that happens there with the compensation of the atonement?

BJ Allen:

Yeah, I would just go back to some, you know, I talked a little bit about faith earlier in the story of the father coming to Christ is, you know, I just want like the viewer to understand that that's the role that Christ plays in everything. So anything you feel like you lack, Christ rolls to compensate what you have now and make it sufficient. And I think that that's why like the scriptures compare faith, you know, or the word to a seed is, you know, in the Bible where Christ talks about how he says, you know, if you have faith, there's a mustard seed, you could say to that mountain move.



And I used to think he was saying that to tell us like, if only you had faith this big, right? Mustard seed, like you could feel like 10 mustard seeds on your finger now, like they're so small. And then I realized that Later on, he gives the parable of the mustard seed, and he says the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, right? It's small, but eventually grows to have birds living in it and stuff. And I was like, maybe that's what he means by if you had faith as a mustard seed. Like your faith isn't, like its value isn't in its current size, but its willingness to let God let it grow. And so if you feel like you don't have this faith sufficient now, if you don't feel like you're a sufficient parent now, or you could say this in any aspect of our life where we're not good enough. is all God wants you to do is to do what you can and then allow him to turn your small little bit of faith into a tree that can be beautiful, right? Like we don't walk outside and look at a tree and be like, oh, that tree's kind of small, right? Like I bet it's going to grow a lot more. We don't look at a tree also and say like, well, like I bet it doesn't have any more growing to do. Like we just appreciate the tree for what it is, but we know it's going to grow and it's going to progress. Like God is very happy with you in the situation you are, whether you have a grown tree or a little seed, as long as you're trying to make it progress and you're trying to make it better. Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

That's powerful. That's really good. So I'm curious, I want to take it to maybe a more practical level. And again, not that you have all the right answers, the right approach, but I'm just, I'm always just curious how other leaders approach this. An individual sets an appointment, comes into your office, it could be a repentance thing, it could be life is hard, whatever. Where do you typically go with it? No two situations are alike, but do you start with reading these three scriptures? say something typically. Walk us through how you approach that to make sure that the compensating power of the atonement is not lost in that process.

BJ Allen:

Yeah. I think, and this is advice I got from some of my mentor leaders, was really the best thing you could do as a leader is just listen. Because like you represent, at least to the individual, you represent the church, right? You're representing the Savior. They want to feel heard. And I just ask a lot of questions, like tell me about the situation and why do you feel heard and why do you feel treated unfairly and or you know, tell me why you're going through a faith crisis or whatever. So I think first of all, like as leaders, we could just do a lot better listening, me included. And then secondly is just ask them about their spiritual relationship with God in Christ. Like where do you feel like you're at? Because at least like what I found is that's a large indicator of how they feel about the situation and how they're going to be able to kind of improve it over time. So, what we call the primary answers like pray and read your scriptures is the primary answers and they're also the celestial answers. When I teach the youth about the importance of building a relationship with Christ through the scriptures and there's that, it's a famous painting with Christ

knocking on the door, there's no door handle on his side, right? And I asked the youth, why is there a door handle on the side? They're like, whoa, wait, you can't come in? I'm like, well, who has to open it to let him in? And I think the more we can just point people to getting to know Jesus, spending time with him in the scriptures, that's where the revelatory experiences happen for them. That's when they start to feel God's love and start to feel healing. So the more that you can give them and help them see and find experiences. to be with Jesus and gain a relationship with him, like that's the most important thing for their whatever problem they're dealing with.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, I like that because it's not having the experience for the experience sake, right? Don't just read the scriptures, read the scriptures, but go have the experience to be with Christ, right? And see what healing is there and what compensation is there, right? It's awesome. Well, and they can dive into your book and I mean, it's on Amazon and everywhere else, right? I mean, any other where people want to reach out or do you have?

BJ Allen:

Yeah. Amazon does our book, Segal. It's 20% off at Segal. If you want to go in person. Awesome.

Kurt Francom:

Cool. Last question I have for you is as you reflect on your time as a leader, as a bishop in the church, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

BJ Allen:

Oh, wow. I think it's helped me really appreciate the role that the Atonement plays in everything. And like, let me just give you an example. So like when I was younger, I felt like Christ felt really distant to me. Like I knew God was real. I knew he was my dad because I prayed to him. I saw answers to my prayers. I saw blessings that came into my life, but I didn't really see the role that Jesus played in that. Like Jesus was only relevant if I did something really bad and I needed to repent, right? Or if I went through something really hard and he can help me through. And as I wrote this book and as I've been a bishop, one thing I've just seen is that Jesus is everywhere and he's making our efforts sufficient and he's compensating us, whether that's I'm in my office And I'm trying so hard to help someone and I just know that my efforts aren't good enough. Or I'm a parent and I'm trying to bless my kids or I feel my own weaknesses and wonder how they

impact with my relationship with God is, you know, everything we have that's good is a gift of Christ. And I think at least to some degree that's what Moroni means when he says that all good things cometh of Christ for men are fallen and no good thing could come unto them. Like we're fallen people, God knows that we're not good enough yet. And with Christ, we're very little, but with him, we can become everything. And I think that that's made me more dedicated to the gospel. It's made me want to be a better disciple of Jesus Christ because I see how involved he is in my day-to-day life. He's not a distant being. He's my friend. And I know that he's with me.

Kurt Francom:

Now that we've reached the end of the episode, I quickly want to thank you for supporting the Leading Saints podcast. There's so much content out there to consider and you picked this one. If Leading Saints has made an impact in your life, we would sure like to hear about it at [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) contact. And if you could quickly text or email this episode to a leader you know, I bet it will bless their life. You can mark off your good turn daily, and let's even call it ministering. Okay, maybe not that far. But seriously, thank you, and help us share this content. Remember, go to [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) to hear the Packard family's experience of when loved ones leave the church.

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. A loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away and to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.