



## **Gathering Israel with the Youth | An Interview with Brad Lowder**

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Kurt Francom:

Does a youth leader ever feel like they haven't figured it out? This hasn't been my experience. However, I couldn't be an effective youth leader today without Dan Duckworth's presentation about going from youth worker to youth mentor. Mentorship is a key concept to understand when leading youth. In his presentation, Dan talks about ways to really turn the traditional approach to leading youth on its head. How can you better know your purpose? How can you find out their life goals? How can you build a relationship that is transformational rather than simply filling time during the weekly youth activity? You can watch Dan's presentation in the Young Saints virtual library by going to [leadingsaints.org/14](https://leadingsaints.org/14). You'll get free access for 14 days and that will give you plenty of time to watch Dan's presentation a few times. Let's give youth the leadership they deserve. 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. Everyone, this is Kurt Francom with Leading Saints. I love these episodes, not only with great people and guests, but people who I consider a friend. And I get invited in Brad Lowder, who we actually interviewed his wife not too long ago. We'll link to her episode as well, because she is the youngest daughter of President Nelson. And we did a phenomenal interview where she talked about dishonoring her mother, Dantzel Nelson. And definitely worth trying out. We'll link to that. And you want to keep listening to this episode because I asked Brad what it's like to be the son-in-law to the prophet president of the church, President Nelson. And he tells a story of how he asked President Nelson for his daughter's hand in marriage. And it's a sweet story one to stick around for. And then we jump into his day job as the Senior Vice President at FamilySearch, and he talks about so many products and projects going on at FamilySearch, just a phenomenal resource. Many of you are just the family history junkies. You know how good that resource is. But we want to talk about in context of the rising generation. Not only understanding the tools that are out there for all of us to use, but how can we weave these tools into youth activities and make it less of like this heavy burden that we're sort of forcing on the youth, but really engaging them and igniting the fire within, the spirit within about the, you know, work of the spirit of Elijah or gathering the house of Israel on both sides of the veil. So definitely one for youth leaders to listen to, missionaries, whether full-time missionaries or ward missionaries to listen to. Just some phenomenal tips of engaging the ward youth group through family history. And I think you'll appreciate some of the upcoming tools they have coming out. So here's my interview with my good friend, Brad Lowder. You know, welcome in my good friend, Brad Lowder, to the studio here. Hey, it's great to be here. I tried to play a joke. I told him we weren't doing video and then, but he still came prepared. White shirt. I am so glad I wore a white shirt and tie. Now, I think what threw you off is I interviewed your wife, Marjorie. Yes. Who is the youngest daughter of President Nelson. And we talked about her, her mother, Dantzel. And so we'll link to that. That's definitely one for the ages. I'm glad we got that recorded. Yeah.

Brad Lowder:

And there was no camera there. So, I'm picturing a similar thing. And so, I'm so glad I shaved and didn't wear a ratty t-shirt. That was close.

Kurt Francom:

Nice. I mean, I hope that just continues to bless your family and grandkids and great-grandkids as we honor Dantzel There.

Brad Lowder:

Yeah, that's been a huge blessing to the family. And it meant a great deal to her father to have his first wife, Dantzel, his eternal mate honored in such a sweet and personal way. That was really meaningful to the whole family. That's awesome.

Kurt Francom:

So you've told me this story and we can cut this out if you don't want it, but being the son-in-law to President Nelson, because you've been 10 years since you've been married? It's about 11 and a half years. Okay. So at the time he got married, he was in the quorum of the 12. Yes. Impossible. So we all have our story of asking the father-in-law for his daughter's hand in marriage. So what's the story behind that?

Brad Lowder:

Well, the short version is Marjorie and I were at that stage in our courtship and we knew that was, it was impending. And so we, well, she reached out to her dad and said, Hey, can we come over next Monday night? Have family home evening with you. We can work a jigsaw puzzle and have some popcorn, which is- Cause he loves jigsaw puzzles. Loves jigsaw puzzles. That's how he and Wendy unwind. That's their form of recreation. And so they accepted the offer. We knew what our goal was. And so, we're literally working this puzzle and I was so nervous, I could not put two pieces together. And I'm thinking, this is not making a great impression on my future in-laws.

Kurt Francom:

I'm sure they're thinking, this poor guy, he just... He's not quite... So, did they think what was coming or... Yeah, sure.

Brad Lowder:

I think Wendy's very intuitive. former therapist and professor of psychology and social work at BYU. So I think she could see it a mile away. And in fact, at one point when the puzzle making, when I finally gave up on doing my own section and I thought, okay, her dad's working on this section with the fence. I'll look for all the pieces with fencing. And I'll hand them to him, he'll pop them in, and that'll make a good impression." And sure enough, that was successful. And so I kept feeding him these pieces, he'd pop them in, and Wendy said, plays well with others, check. So yeah, I think she could... I see what's coming. Anyway, Marjorie and Wendy went to clear off the popcorn dishes and went upstairs. And so her dad and I are sitting at this table where the

puzzles were. And I said, Elder Nelson, I have a real important question to ask you. He says, what is it, Brad? And I mentioned that I was just absolutely head over heels in love with his daughter and would love his permission and blessing to marry her in the temple. And he started crying. I started crying. He said, of course, we would be honored to have you in the family. And he said, I'm not going to live forever. Now, this was 11 and a half years ago. And he's already talking. He really is going to. Exactly. Anyway, so he said, this means the world to me to know that there'd be someone to take care of my baby daughter. So anyway, he and I are bawling. Marjorie and Wendy walk back in the room and Wendy's looking at the two of us who are wiping the tears away going, what is going on here? And so we told them and anyway, we kind of wrapped up that conversation. And he said, you know, before we wrap up the evening, let's kneel together and have family prayer because you're now part of the family. And he said the most beautiful prayer and included an apostolic blessing upon Marjorie and me. And it was an evening I'll never forget how kind and gracious they were. There was no feeling of of, you know, having to go through an extensive interview to get the yes. No, it didn't grill me. all of my concerns and fears just vanished because of their love and acceptance. And that's, that's who they are. They're very core. They're just so loving and kind and accepting. It was really remarkable.

Kurt Francom:

Love it. Love it. Now you're also you're in your day job. You're a senior vice president at FamilySearch.

Brad Lowder:

Yes. Yeah. I've been there about 11 years. I absolutely love it. It's been such a joy to be engaged in, in this great work and, and to have my, my day job be helping to gather Israel, helping to be part of this great work. And in fact, I haven't shared this with a ton of people who have occurred, but most of my adult life, I had this feeling like at the end of my career, I would love to come and work for the church and offer some of my talents and experience to helping build the kingdom. And that's something that was always in my heart. So when this opportunity came up, it just absolutely felt like a tender mercy. And it's been an absolute joy to be a part of this work.

Kurt Francom:

And how would you describe your job in general? Are you like in the thick and thin of certain projects?

Brad Lowder:

Yeah, that's a great question. You know, a lot of the people who work at FamilySearch are kind of on the technical side, software developers, probably maybe close to half of the people that work there are in the IT side.

Kurt Francom:

Essentially, it's almost like a software company, right?

Brad Lowder:

It kind of is. Yeah. Yeah. When you think of the huge amounts of data that we have to manage and and make searchable and provide experiences that are meaningful while managing this giant database. I've been in the engagement division, which is more or less the marketing part. So what we do is figure out how do we How do we get members involved in doing this work in ways that are meaningful and purposeful and joyful and don't feel like, hey, welcome to the salt mines. Here's your pickaxe. That's kind of the old paradigm of everybody's got to be a serious researcher and we love the researchers and they do great work and are huge contributors to building the tree and providing more records and But the majority of our patrons are people like you and me, who aren't genealogists, are people who want to, and especially for members of the church, it's really about, I want to go to the temple on behalf of an ancestor. Because that makes it so meaningful. So that's what we're all about. So the emails you get with a hint, a record hint, or, hey, we found a green temple. Here's a great, great grandparent who needs to have these ordinances done. Click here to reserve these. So, that's really what our team does. And more specifically, the team I lead is very involved in engaging the rising generation. And so, that's my area of emphasis is, how do we get children, youth, and young adults to embrace and love this work and get all the blessings that come from Template Family History?

Kurt Francom:

So, I'm curious to, before we get into that with the rising generation, the, you know, with this, the swell of temple building, I mean, how does that impact family searchers? I mean, you've always sort of been engaged with genealogy.

Brad Lowder:

That's really a cool question. One of the biggest ways it impacts us is just providing records for members. So they can go in, find their ancestors, add them to their family tree, and then a green temple appears. So now they can go and do the proxy work for their ancestors. This is a huge task for us as a department, as FamilySearch. With the acceleration of temple building, we have to accelerate our work in going out and acquiring the records. That means doing deals with archives, with government entities, churches that have these records. And then we digitize those, we take the digital photography and then we do the indexing, mostly computer aided now. So, we have had to accelerate this work all around the world because of temples coming online. So, we have whole groups of people that are dedicated to doing that all over the world.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And that's one of those things about this, you know, we joke, President Nelson is like, how many more temples this time. Right. And I'm always shocked. Like he really did 20 more temples. Wow. I think we're out of cities, aren't we? But just how the sort of that domino effect of now we need more temple workers. Now we need, it re-engages and rallies people around this doctrine of the temple to engage them in the gospel, you know, and that's whether that's finding records or showing up at a 6am session to help out. Yeah.

Brad Lowder:

And it's different, you know, think about they announce a temple in Saratoga Springs or Layton or, you know, or wherever in Utah, or another one in St. George, that's a very different thing for family search. We have huge record coverage in North America. And most Latter-day Saints in North America are part of the European diaspora, and we have great record coverage in most of Europe. So we had a temple in Leighton, we're not panicked about, ah, how are we going to get records so these people can go to the temple for their ancestors? Now, when they announce a temple in Papua New Guinea or- Yeah. India, that's a huge challenge for us because we have almost no records in a lot of these newly announced temple districts. So we have to figure out a whole record strategy of who has the records, how are we going to acquire them and digitize them. And so that acceleration has really created a unique opportunity for us to expand the way we see our work because it's all about supporting President Nelson's vision of bringing the temples to the people. And so, that creates a huge need and opportunity for us to figure that out on the record side, which is pretty exciting if you think about it.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And we just don't, as lay members, we don't think about it. We just show up at the temple, you got the stack of names and here's your name, you know. And I'm thinking like India, like you

always talk about how many people actually are alive in India. now think of how many people have died in India. And how do we get access to that?

Brad Lowder:

Huge challenge. And a lot of, in a lot of places, these records are crumbling or they've been damaged by, you know, hurricane or typhoon. And in some places like Africa, a lot of the family history is oral genealogy. So these are stories that are passed on. So a village elder, there's a saying that every time a village elder dies, a library burns down. So we're in a rush. to capture these oral genealogies in places like Africa and then capture those and create digital records for those that are connected to family trees. So members in Africa, as a temple has announced, can connect their four generations to these records. But it's exciting and the amazing thing is the miracles and we see the hand of God over and over. in people showing up, in archivists opening their doors and saying, yes, please come digitize our records. We want these preserved. We want to partner with you. We're just constantly seeing the hand of the Lord in this work. Wow. That's cool.

Kurt Francom:

Anything else just generally about family search that would bring context or that would interest people?

Brad Lowder:

Well, yeah, something that occurs to me is an app that probably a lot of people haven't heard about. It's called Get Involved. So you can go download it and it gives some some opportunities to do these little micro experiences, like what we call reverse indexing, instead of traditional indexing, which is slowly fading out. This is taking records that the computer is learning how to index and teaching the computer how to read words and numbers in different languages. So you can go in and look and say, for example, which ones of these are Francom and which ones aren't. So you're looking at handwritten records going, yes, yes, no, not sure. So we do that to accelerate the artificial intelligence of these machines learning how to index and read handwriting in different languages and different kinds of script. Anyway, there are lots of these little experiences that someone, maybe instead of checking their Instagram for the 40th time today, they can go to get involved and spend five minutes and do some of these activities that are super fun. They're kind of, I don't know if addictive is the right word to use here, but they're sticky. It's like you want to keep doing it. It's so fun. And you could, in five minutes, you can knock out a bunch of these names and really help accelerate the work. So, that's really cool.

Kurt Francom:

Get involved. Yeah. And that's a separate app. It's not part of the... It's a separate app.

Brad Lowder:

There's also a web version. So, you can go to [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) and look for get involved and then there's the web version of that also. So, lots of cool little experiences and ways you can help. Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

Is there anything, and maybe this isn't really what you pay attention to or your department, but as far as AI and family search or genealogy, is anything, I'm sure something's happening there, but- A lot is happening there and that's a different guest.

Brad Lowder:

Okay. There you go. Do I look smart enough to know AI? Hey, you look pretty smart. No, we have a whole team of experts that are specifically working on that. And that's really the new frontier. And all the family history and genealogy companies are diving headfirst into AI because of how it accelerates the work. not just in accelerating indexing, but are there ways that AI can help us build trees? Can we create an algorithm where the computer can figure out with all of these billions of records out there, this person is in your family tree and here's how they're connected. And that's kind of the next big thing, I think. But again, I'm not the AI guy.

Kurt Francom:

But it is, I mean, AI does some remarkable things with data, right? Lots of data, more data. It can do all sorts of things to find things that would take us years.

Brad Lowder:

And we have such a huge data set. And so that for us is a giant opportunity that we've got some very smart people working on. So buckle up. It's going to be fun to see how things accelerate There.



Kurt Francom:

So let's jump into the rising generation and engaging them with family search. Where's a good jumping off point?

Brad Lowder:

Well, I mentioned get involved, that's really fun, but let me just back up and kind of set the vision for this. You know, 2018, when President Nelson gave his worldwide devotional for the youth, he called upon them to gather Israel on both sides of the veil. And he said, this is the greatest work, the greatest cause that you'll ever be involved with. And you are preserved to come to the earth at this time to do this great work. And he asked them, will you be part of the battalion of the Lord and help gather Israel? I got goosebumps just talking about it. It was so cool. And there was this resounding yes, the rising generation. Yeah, we're in, man. We want to do this. And then thought about it a little bit, but like, what does it look like? Show us how to do it. Give us a little instruction and point us to how we can actually do this. So that's part of what we're doing and part of what our team is working on is how do we really engage them, not just engage them, but let them lead out. So it's kind of two aspects to that. One is if you're a bishop, a stake president, and youth presidency, what are ways the youth could really lead the work in your ward or stake? And maybe rather than prescribing, hey, here's what you gotta do, one through five, just empower them to figure it out. Have them go figure it out and come back because these are bright, talented, intelligent, inspired youth and young adults who will come up with the solutions. And let's let them lead out. I mean, it's just such a huge opportunity for them to truly answer the clarion call from the prophet. whom they love and they want to follow. So let's let them lead out. And then, you know, there are things like the get involved app. The first thing we ask everyone to do in the church, and especially the rising generation, is use ordinances ready. But here's the catch. Elder David A. Bednar has taught repeatedly, sequence matters. Now here's What I mean by that in this context, he's taught us, you don't start with ordinances ready. You start with the savior. That's where you start with youth and young adults. So they understand the vision and the meaning and the purpose and the why. It's all about the savior. that we can bind ourselves to the Savior through ordinances and covenants. Now, a lot of those ordinances and covenants happen, we do it ourselves. We take the sacrament, we get baptized, confirmed, we go receive our own endowment. But the majority of the time that we're going to perform and experience ordinances and covenants are going to be for our deceased ancestors. And we're not only binding ourselves to the Savior when we do this proxy work, But we're helping facilitating our beloved family members, our ancestors, for them to bind themselves to the savior. So that's where we start.

Kurt Francom:

And kind of laying the groundwork of this is what we're actually doing. We're not just going through These.

Brad Lowder:

It's not a gadget. It's not a gimmick. It's not a little tool. It's the why. We start there. We put the savior at the focus. And then we say, now go do ordinances ready. That's right on the app. There's a button ordinances, well, temple and then ordinances ready. And you can say what ordinance you want to do. If you're a youth, you can say, I'm going to do baptisms and confirmations. And then you hit the go button and it'll come back with names ready for you to take to the temple. Now, many of those might be your own family names. If there's no one in your tree that has a green temple, look at members of your ward, of your stake who have green temples so you can serve your neighbors. by helping bless their ancestors. So, that's the second step. Ordinance is ready. Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

And is there, because I know, like in my family, we have our group, right? So, I can see maybe what my dad's put in there and if ordinances, is that something a ward or youth has to be proactive in creating first so that they can see shared records or does that happen automatically?

Brad Lowder:

Well, it happens automatically, but we're creating tools now where families can collaborate and they can share information and share research and share. But you can, for example, share, if you've reserved a family name for temple ordinances, you can share it with someone. And that collaboration just creates some energy. It just makes it so fun and more meaningful when your family's involved and it's about family serving family.

Kurt Francom:

So we talked about keeping the Savior at the center, then ordinance ready, and then where's the next place to go with the rising generation?

Brad Lowder:

Well, the third step, and here's our formula, it's really simple. Number one, start with the Savior. Number two, ordinance is ready. It's easy. Anybody can do it. You're going to get a name and you're going to be able to print it, go to the temple and do the ordinance. or take your phone to the family name desk, they scan the QR code, boom, they print the card for you. So that's number two. Start with the savior, ordinances ready. Number three is add what you know. Because sometimes you're going to go in there, a lot of members in North America, it might not be as simple to find a family member, an ancestor who has a green temple ready for ordinances. So, you might need to do a little bit of work to find someone that maybe is just one little piece of data away from a green temple. And some people in other parts of the world, they don't even have their first four generations in their tree. So, that's a great opportunity for them to say, wait a minute, I haven't done the work for my grandfather, my great-grandfather, my father who passed away. So the add what you know could be literally going in from living memory, from what you know, and from talking to family members, talking to your parents, getting the names, the dates, putting those in your family tree. And here's what, here's the magic of doing that. When you start to put in living memory as we call it, these first four generations, that a lot of people can do from memory or from talking to family members. We have so many records out there and a lot of them are already in a tree, but they're not connected to you yet. So when you add what you know magically reconnect the tree to your grandfather, your grandparents, and now you have thousands of people in the tree that you didn't know you had. And you can go through and find all these green temples of your own ancestors just waiting for you to serve them in the temple. Wow. So it's just, that's one, two, three.

Kurt Francom:

Nice. So that you don't necessarily need to like go and find your grandpa's birth certificate or you just need to make sure you have the dates and then they're, you know.

Brad Lowder:

If you do have records you can add as a source, that's better. It's great. Yeah. But a lot of times it's your mother knows this information, maybe a living grandparent knows the date, the place of their parents' birth, so that can qualify them. But we do like records when they're available to substantiate as a source.

Kurt Francom:

And I'm going to imagine for, especially for converts to the church who, you know, for me, I, I, you know, we, I sometimes take for granted just how much research has been done for my ancestors, but maybe people coming to the church, it's not There.

Brad Lowder:

Yeah. Yeah. And here's something really cool that I wanted to share about converts. So many of them, I hear this over and over and over again, all around the world, by the way, not just in North America, they will prepare shortly after their baptisms to go to the temple and to be baptized and confirmed for their own ancestors, someone they feel an affinity toward and feel like, oh, I need to do this for my father who's passed away or for my grandfather or grandmother. And they do the work And it's a huge blessing to them. They're absolutely thrilled to get to serve their family that way. But here's something magical that happens. Someone, let's say a Templar family history consultant in the ward, or ministering brother or sister, or just a friend in the ward, helps them set up their account and start to add some names, and they connect to their tree. And they're going, and now that they're a member, they see green temples. That's only for members of the church, because those are the ready-to-go names for temple ordinances. They can see these ancestors, these relatives, and it shows all of their temple work's been done, and they went, wait, wait a minute. Look at all of these relatives I have who are already members of the church. I thought I was the only Latter-day Saint in my family. And they just weep when they see all of these names of people and they feel like, I'm not only part of this church, this is part of our family. This is part of family heritage is this faith. Isn't that cool? Yeah, that is cool. Oh, and something else. Yeah. While you're talking about converts, we have created, we've got such smart people at FamilySearch. I mean, I'm never the smartest guy in the room at any meeting ever go to, but we've got these brilliant people who've created this tool called Family Name Assist. So, if you're a bishop, if you're a counselor to Bishop Rick, if you're in the ward council, just pay attention. You can forget the rest, but pay attention to this part. Family name assist. So, when you're a leader in clerk resources, and let's say someone was baptized, a convert was baptized in your ward, you're interviewing them for a temple recommend. And it's like, I don't even have a family search account. I don't know how to do this, but I want to take a family name. So Bishop or someone he designates could be a counselor, a member of the ward council, can use this tool, Family Name Assist, to help them qualify one ancestor for temple work. So they could, in a matter of days from being baptized, with a little help from the ward council or the bishop, have a card ready to go to the temple for baptism and confirmation, and it's someone of their choosing. Part of the question is that a bishop or someone would ask, is there someone you felt strongly about sharing the gospel with and providing them the blessings of church membership and of baptism and confirmation? Oh yeah, yeah. If it's a woman, yes, my grandmother, We were so close. I just love her. And I just felt her cheering me on when I was taking the mystery lesson. I could just feel her nudging me to be baptized. And now I feel like she's waiting for me to do this for her. Okay, that's who we're going to do. Oh, cool. And they, you know, in a couple minutes, have prepared a family name of the converts choosing to take to the temple.

Kurt Francom:

How cool is that? That is cool. And that's just done, like, it's not necessarily an app, but it's just on the desktop website. Yeah.

Brad Lowder:

It's on the desktop. It's in leader and clerk resources, LCR. Oh, really? Okay. That's good to know. So, a member of the ward council can go to it and use this tool to walk through a few simple steps. And this convert can literally walk out of their temple recommended with a family name card for someone they love and are excited to do this work for. So that's a huge breakthrough. That's kind of hot off the press. Or as Marjorie's dad would say, H off the P. He loves abbreviations.

Kurt Francom:

Nice. And then I think that's just a good mindset shift to think about like when, because we handle it so much like paperwork almost like, okay, you're going to the temple, we got to do the temple recommend. But to have this in mind, like we're not just doing a temple recommend, we're now making sure they're in the family search universe, right? Let's make sure they have an account and a name and just get that ball rolling.

Brad Lowder:

Exactly. In fact, if you look in the handbook and leadership instruction, this is referred to as temple and family history work. So we like to see it as one work that we exist as a department of the church, the family history department of the church, slash familysearch.org, Family Search International. We exist for one purpose, and that is to nurse the temples with names, to provide qualified names of ancestors of members so they can serve them in the temple and be part of that process of being saviors on Mount Zion for their own family. That's why we exist. So everything we do is with that in mind, is how do we get the records so that members of the church can go to the temple over and over and over on behalf of their ancestors. So, they can not only bless the ancestor, but bless themselves. Yeah, that's powerful.

Kurt Francom:

Where should we go next? What's a good, as far as the rising generation, they've talked about some good tools.

Brad Lowder:

Yeah, that's, you know, I'm pretty fired up when it comes to helping bless the rising generation. Because I see, I see what happens when they engage in this work. Yeah. And I don't even like the word work. In fact, Template Family History work makes it sound like you know, oh, this is going to be homework and it's hard work. When we do it right with the right mindset, it's joyful and it's fun. It's engaging and stuff we want to share with our friends and get them fired up. But here's something I want to really focus on. And this is great for leaders of the church in particular. is instead of focusing on kind of this aspect of work and, hey, we got to resolve duplicates and we got to, you know, find more sources or, you know, whatever the kind of the genealogical side is, I want leaders to think of, how is this engaging in this great effort? See how I didn't say work. That's nice. Yeah. How does it bless the rising generation? Again, starting with the end in mind, it's like, what do we want for the children, for the youth, for the young adults of the church. And we have a list of promised blessings that have been pronounced by prophets and apostles. And these are profound. Elder Bednar, David A. Bednar, he promised that the youth who engage in this great cause and are doing this are going to receive protection against the increasing effects of the adversary. I mean, what bishop or what youth advisor doesn't want that for these youth? Elder Dale G. Renlund, when he was talking about many of the blessings, he talked about the power that comes to us. And one of those was the power to heal that which needs healing. I mean, think about that. How important is that for this generation who are just absolutely wrestlers. I can tell I live in the country. We're absolutely wrestling. with issues of identity and this epidemic of depression and anxiety that is so rampant with this generation. And for them to receive these blessings, to heal that which needs healing. And along those lines, there's a friend of mine who's a professor at BYU, Dr. Brian Hill. He's a professor of experience design and management. And he's done this really cool research. It was actually written up in church news. published other places. But he did this research that found this connection between particularly older adolescents who do family history stuff, know some of their family history, know some of these stories, know about their ancestors and an increased sense of identity. I mean, how important is that? Yeah, that's huge. To have a deeper sense of who you are and what your place is in this bigger family, you know, past, present and future. And along those lines, a few years back at Emory University, Dr. Marshall Duke and Dr. Robin Fivish did this research that was so profound and they found something very similar, but even deeper and broader. And that is that children and youth who know their family stories are more resilient. They're less apt to struggle with mental health issues. They're more capable of handling life's challenges. And a lot of that is just having a sense of knowing who you are. And a lot of that is when you know your family stories, you have these examples of people in your own family who've wrestled. Life's big challenges and come through the other side better for it. Yeah. And when we, I or you or our children, our grandchildren, when the rising generation learn these stories of their own ancestors, of the challenges and the trials that they had and how they overcame those, rose above those, they're fortified, they're strengthened. It's like, this is who I am, man. This is my DNA. I can get through this. Look what my grandfather went through. Look what my great-grandmother went through. I got this." And that is just so powerful. And another piece of this research that's so cool, they actually came up with a do you know scale. And it's 20 questions that are predictors of if children and youth know the answers to some or many of

these questions, they are predictably more fortified and more resilient. And there's nothing tricky. I mean, stuff you can sit down over a family dinner, Thanksgiving dinner, you're sitting around, have your cheat sheet of the 20 questions and ask, hey, grandma, how'd you and grandpa meet? Tell me your meet cute story. How'd you guys meet and fall in love? Oh, cool. Hey, dad, What was your first job as a teenager? Hey mom, what was it like going to high school? Where did you go to high school? Hey, did any of your siblings or any of your family have a really like serious illness or injury that they had to overcome? Things like that. Those are the 20 questions. So it's nothing tricky, nothing magic. But the magic is that when we have these experiences as families, it literally fortifies the rising generation. Easy to do and so powerful. Yeah. So that's something that's actionable. You can just go home and you can do it tonight, next time your family's together.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Is there any thought on, because I think, especially when I was a youth, like family history, genealogy was like this thing. It was almost like in this sort of event or something you went to, right? Like, oh, this, this week for young men's, we're going down to the family history library and we're going to show you some stuff where now it's much more with these different apps and things that can, it's just like a little bit here, a little bit there. Right. And so, I mean, I'm just thinking about those youth leaders is like, okay, like we want to get involved there, but there's all this other stuff we're trying to do too. So, any advice on how to really just work this into the culture of the youth?

Brad Lowder:

I love that. That is such a cool question. So, here are my thoughts on that, Kurt. I think the more we treat it like this kind of separate thing over here that we're going, okay, now we're going to stop everything else and go and do family history stuff. The more we treat it like that, I think the less we enculturate this. I think where the winds come is when it's a natural part of something we're already doing. All right? So, let's just throw out a wild example. Let's say it's an institute is going to have a dance. And at the dance, could you in the classroom right near where the dance is, could you have a couple of family history experiences where they can come in and do like, compare a face and find out which ancestor you look like. Or do it, do relatives around me. Yeah, I love that. Dating someone and find out if you can keep dating or not, right?

Kurt Francom:

Oh no, we're first cousins.

Brad Lowder:

First cousins. You are now in the friend zone. So that's what we're seeing as more successful is when it's integrated real naturally into the stuff we're already doing and not turned into some kind of special thing of now we're going to do. And the idea is we want temple and family history to become this normal and natural part of people's worship pattern, their personal worship pattern. not just adults but especially the rising generation. That it just is what they do and it feels natural, it feels normal and it's easy and it's fun and they just, they wouldn't think of going to the temple without a family name. Yeah. That's what we want to see happen is just kind of in these organic ways. Imagine this, I sound like Carl Sagan, imagine a world. But imagine just every seminary teacher, every institute teacher, every religion instructor at every church university, every youth advisor, every youth Sunday school advisor, that every once in a while, not every week, but every once in a while, they say, hey, we have five minutes left in class. Everybody get out your phone. We're going to gather Israel. That's our vision, is let's work it into what we're already doing. Let's make it simple and fun. We have the tools to do that so that people can facilitate an experience at the end of a class. Let's gather Israel in the last five minutes of class. The first time you say it, wait, get out my phone and gather Israel. Are you crazy? Because by the way, they live on their phones and we have ways for them to do that. That's kind of our vision of where we want to get and we're seeing it more and more, more and more institutes. are working this into the curriculum and not like, oh, you want to take the family history course? No. It's an eternal family course. There's these little curricular insertions that are experiential. There's some doctrine, but we know the rising generation resonates with experience. They need to understand the doctrine, but let's not just preach to them and bore them to death. Let's say, let's have them get out their phone and show them some really fun ways in a few minutes they can help gather Israel. That's where the really cool stuff happens.

Kurt Francom:

helpful and I just love the idea of like in using these apps in fun ways like I love you know relatives around me and the best thing is like not only is it fun to do it in the moment but by the time you're done with that everybody has that app on their phone right you've those that didn't you get them make sure they're on their And then even just taking the youth to the app library and saying, all right, search family search and, you know, ping those four apps and now they're on your phone and we're going to use them here and there. So, keep them on your phone.

Brad Lowder:

And then when those last five minutes come up or... I got to tell you, you know, we talked, I mentioned how Templin family history are one work. missionary, sharing the gospel, that's part of one work. And for me, the easiest entree for a stranger, a friend who's not of our faith into opening a door of conversation and trust is giving them a discovery experience, a family history.



I've had such cool experiences with this. And the executive director of our department, Elder Kevin Hamilton, does this all the time. If he's on a flight, he's at a dinner somewhere, some kind of function, turns to the person next to him and says, hey, we have this really cool app that's got the family tree of the world on it. Do you want to find out if one of your ancestors is on the tree? And about 10 out of 10 people go, yeah, are you kidding? And it's the find a person function on the app, on the Family Tree app. So, you go to find a person and it's simple. And I've done it a dozen times and no one's ever said, no, I don't want to do this. And then you just say, tell me the name of a grandparent who isn't living. Oh, Oscar Elwood Lowder. Okay. Well, I'm giving my family. Yeah. So, tell me the name of an ancestor, a grandparent, a great-grandparent who's not living.

Kurt Francom:

In my family. Harold Frankham. Okay.

Brad Lowder:

So I type in Harold Frankham. So do you know the approximate year when he died? Because most people, if you go back a couple of generations, they don't know when they were born, but usually they can remember about when he died. Yeah. About what year did he die? I think 1984. Okay, 1984. Great. famous year if you're Orwellian. That's right. You can edit that part out. But can't miss an opportunity for a rad joke. All right. So then I type in 1984 and then search. I get a bunch of returns of possible matches. And usually the first one on the list of returns is the match. And I show it to you. And nine out of 10 times when I do this with somebody, they grab the phone out of my hand because they are flipping out. They go, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's him. And they push the person thing, and they go to the person page, and they're seeing the memories. And this has literally happened to me. They're thumbing through some of the photos, and I've had a person start crying. Because they say, I've never seen this wedding photo of my grandparents. Oh, wow. And they're like choking back the tears. Yeah. These are not members of the church. This is someone who for the first time is experiencing this. And they're going, what in the heck? So how do I get this app? Oh, you go here and you're, how much does it cost? What's the subscription? Say it's free. Yeah. Okay. Well you have the, for the first six months and then how much? No, it's free. And then they always ask this question. What are they going to ask me when I say it's free?

Kurt Francom:

Uh, how is it funded or paid for?

Brad Lowder:

Yeah. Why in the heck is it free? Somebody's got to be paying for it. So yeah. Yeah. This is funded and sponsored by the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We pay for it completely." Then they ask, why? Why would they do this? That's got to be a big investment. Then I say, because we believe that families can be eternal. And when Marjorie and I were married, we were married in a temple, in the house of the Lord, in this simple sweet ceremony where we were married for time and eternity. And because this is really the essence of everything we do in our church, is to bind families for eternities. We want to make this beautiful, sweet opportunity available for our ancestors so that I can go and do this for my great-grandparents. That's why we do this. Now it blesses the rest of the world because they find their families, they see their family trees. We provide these billions of records for free so they can build out their tree and it blesses them. They feel connected to their broader family, they feel this deeper sense of identity and connection and resilience and they feel the spirit of Elijah. They feel the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of families. people all over the world, millions. The majority of the patrons of FamilySearch are not LDS. by a long shot, most of them are what we call general public. And they're being drawn there because the spirit is moving on them to connect to their family. So anyway, that's just another cool thing you can do with the app. I do it all the time with friends not of our faith. You know, I'll be on the tarmac for the plane to take off and I'll just, you know, they say, where do you work? Oh, family search. Oh, what's that? I tell them what it is, they go, well, that's cool. Yeah. And then I do that and it blows their mind. Yeah. And they, nine out of 10 times, they're like choking back tears. That's so cool. And sometimes, and again, I'm not a great genealogist, so don't email me and ask me for help with your We got real genealogists who do that. But a lot of times when I have these encounters with a stranger, I say, would you be interested in me like seeing if I could find a few ancestors that are lost to you or you don't know anything about them? You do that for me? Well, what are you going to charge?" I said, no, I want to do just as a friend, just as a service to you. Yeah. So I asked him a couple of questions like, okay, tell me, you know, some information about your parents or grandparents and who don't you know? Like what family don't you know? And I'll go back to my computer that night at the hotel or back at work. And I can always find something they didn't know. And I'll email that to them. And sometimes they say, can you help me set up an account? So I help them and I hand it over to them. And I've already added some names to their tree of people they didn't know existed. And they're absolutely floored. They're just moved beyond explanation. That's awesome.

Kurt Francom:

Love it. Any other principles as far as the rising generation before we begin to wrap up or how do we do?

Brad Lowder:

Can I read a quote from President Nelson? Yeah. You know, you can't ever go wrong quoting the prophet. I know, right? And what a prophet, oh my goodness, he is just beyond phenomenal in every regard. Yeah. Here's what he said, while Templin family history work has the power to bless those beyond the veil, It has an equal power to bless the living. It has a refining influence on those who are engaged in it. I promise that lovingly performing ordinances for ancestors will strengthen and protect our youth and families in a world that is becoming increasingly evil. Please remember that you are not alone and you will never be alone. And I would add that these ministering angels know who you are. They care for you. They love you. They will become a vital part of the fortification of your home. Cool. We expect you to seek inspiration and revelation. And as you do that in your youth, in a world that is increasingly wicked and ever more chaotic, we promise you, you will be safeguarded. You'll be guided. You'll be protected. I promise you, this is still President Nelson. I promise you that as you increase your time in temple and family history work, you will increase and improve your ability to hear Him.

Kurt Francom:

Isn't that amazing? That's powerful.

Brad Lowder:

Words of a prophet. Yeah. So it's just so much we can do to help fortify the rising generation. We just need to point them in the right direction and introduce them in a few of the tools and let them lead out. Let them figure out what they can do to share that with their friends, with their peers, and with the older members of the ward. Let's have them be the leaders. Let's have them be the ones that are seeking and receiving the inspiration how to get a ward on fire and receiving all these blessings.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, it's powerful. Love it. Any other point principle story that we need to cover?

Brad Lowder:

Several years ago, this is probably eight or nine years ago, my youngest son, Dallin, was serving a mission in Houston, Texas, Spanish speaking. Great missionary. And I had an assignment from work, from family search, that took me to Houston. So I reached out to the missionary department, asked for permission to spend a day with him proselyting. They said, yes, as long as it's okay with the mission president. I reached out to the president and he said,

yes, you may do that. Got all the necessary approvals and made it clear that this isn't a field trip. We're not going to go to Six Flags and, you know- Pretend like we're working. Pretend like we're working and goof off. We're going to go do the work." And we did. We spent the day teaching their contacts, their friends. A couple of the visits were brand new converts whom we helped prepare a family name for temple ordinances because they were getting ready to go to the temple to do baptisms. A couple of people we were able to jointly lay our hands on and pronounce priesthood blessings. I mean, the whole day was just so profound and so sweet to get to be my son's missionary companion, to see him, how lovingly he was ministering to these people in and out of the church, how his heart was just riveted on the cross of our Redeemer and serving his children. And to get to be a part of that and see him and have this joint experience of proselyting together was one of the highlights of my life. Well, the only regret I had, this lingering kind of gnawing thing was, I got to spend a day being his missionary companion. I know it's not possible, but I wish he could have been my missionary companion for a day in Germany, in the Germany Munich mission where I served a million years ago, which is now the Alpine German speaking mission. I just had that gnawing, oh, this was so sweet. I wish he could have had the experience I just had. Well, he got home from his mission, and we'd prepared a bunch of names to do baptisms and confirmations. So we went to the Salt Lake Temple, and I hadn't looked closely at the names. We'd done the work and got them all ready. I think we had 10 names and we decided, okay, you baptize me, the first five, then we'll swap and I'll baptize you for the second five, these names. So we give the name to the recorder in the baptistry. So he baptizes me for these five and we get to the second or third name that I was doing the baptisms for. And I read this name and I read the information. And I started weeping and could barely speak the words of the baptismal prayer, baptize my son on behalf of this gentleman. And anyway, as we exit the water, you know, Dallas looking at me like, what the heck just happened, man? There's something going on here. one of the witnesses in the baptistry, like, are you willing to share with us what just transpired? And I said, yes. I got to spend a day with my son and his mission. And I always wanted him to be a part of my mission. And that name was an ancestor from Heilbronn, Germany, where I spent seven months of my mission, that very town. Oh, cool. And I was able to baptize my son for someone, an ancestor from a town where I served in my mission. So he got to be part of my mission for that moment. And it was just overcome by the, not only the sweetness of that experience and kind of completing that circle, but the tender mercy of our Heavenly Father to grant that righteous desire. was just overwhelming to me. There's just so much grace and goodness and so many moments of feeling our Heavenly Father's love and feeling guided by the Spirit and having our testimonies fortified when we engage in this great cause. And it's been such a pleasure, Kurt. You're such a good man. You're so kind to invite me. Absolutely. Any chance I get to hang out with you, I'm going to take.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Well, hey, if you get President Nelson to allow me to interview him, we can hang out the whole day. I'm just kidding. Well, I'll have his people call you.

Brad Lowder:

Okay. Yeah, sure. Sure.

Kurt Francom:

They keep avoiding my calls, but no. Just the last question to wrap up, like just a summary of encouragement you'd give to youth leaders or even the youth themselves of encouraging them down the gathering of Israel path with family history. Yeah.

Brad Lowder:

Well, just that, as President Nelson said, there's no greater cause. There's no greater effort that's happening on the earth today than gathering of Israel on both sides of the veil. And they are the ones to lead out. And when they do this, they're blessed in so many ways. They're blessed with protection. They're fortified. They have a greater sense of identity. It helps heal the things in their life that need healing. It's just a multitude of blessings. And as President Nelson said, there are ministering angels that will attend to them as they engage in this great work. And so let's just get them involved, get them going on it, and just light the fire and let them go and let them lead out. And as they do, they'll be blessed in ways that we can't even imagine. And this could be the very thing that keeps some of them on the covenant path who might be struggling, who might be questioning their faith, and this can be the thing that anchors them to the Savior.

Kurt Francom:

That concludes this episode of the Leading Saints podcast. Hey, listen, would you do me a favor? You know, everybody's got that friend who listens to a ton of podcasts and maybe they aren't aware of Leading Saints. So would you mind taking the link of this episode or another episode of Leading Saints and just texting it to that friend? You know who I'm talking about? The friend who always listens to podcasts and is always telling you about different podcasts. Well, it's your turn to tell that friend about Leading Saints. So share it. We'd also love to hear from you if you have any perspective or thought on this episode. You can go to [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) and actually leave a comment on the episode page or reach out to us at [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) contact. Remember, go listen to Dan Duckworth's presentation about youth mentorship by visiting [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) 14.

Gordon B. Hinckley:

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.