



## Monthly Ministering Night | A How I Lead Interview with Garth Pedersen

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KURT FRANCOM:

It seems like struggles with pornography get most the airtime these days since it is so available in modern times. However, drug abuse and substance addiction is growing at shocking rates. As a church leader, you need to be prepared. We have a library full of resources focused on this topic. The presentation I would recommend you start with is Joseph Grenny's presentation about what we can learn from Captain Moroni to help our loved ones overcome struggles with drugs and alcohol. His story of how he loved his son through his addiction is powerful and redemptive. You can listen to this presentation in the Recovering Saints Library by going to [leadingsaints.org/14](https://leadingsaints.org/14). Put your information in there and that will give you 14 days at no cost. I made it easier for you and put the link in the show notes. Or you can go to [leadingsaints.org/14](https://leadingsaints.org/14). So my name is Kurt Francom and I am the founder and executive director of Leading Saints and obviously the host of the Leading Saints podcast. Now I started Leading Saints back in 2010. It was just a hobby blog and it grew from there. By the time 2014 came around, we started the podcast and that's really when it got some Traction and took off 2016, we became a 501c3 nonprofit organization and we've been growing ever since. And now I get the opportunity of interviewing and talking with remarkable people all over the world. Now this is a segment we do on the Leading Saints podcast called How I Lead. And we reach out to everyday leaders, they're not experts, gurus, authors, PhDs, they're just everyday leaders who've been asked to serve in a specific leadership calling and we simply ask them, How is it that you lead? And they go through some remarkable principles that should be in a book, that should be behind a PhD. They're usually that good. And we just talk about sharing what the other guy's doing. And I remember being a leader, just simply wanting to know, okay, I

know what I'm trying to do, but what's the other guy doing? What's working for him? And so that's why every Wednesday or so, we publish these how I lead segments to share. Welcome back to another How I Lead episode. My name is Kurt Francom, and today we're welcoming in Garth Pedersen from the Queen Creek area in, you know, Phoenix area in Arizona. And he reached out to me a few months ago and said, Hey, you know, I've been trying some different things. And I said, I want to hear about your different things. And so pay attention to the—especially he talks about the ministering night they do every fourth Sunday, I believe it was, and how he models or encourages others to go out and minister on this night, making it a group effort and truly showing leadership, you know, sort of walk alongside type of leadership with the elders in this quorum. And we talk all things ministering in this. I know there's a variety of ways to come at ministering, to do the interview thing, and Garth simply shares his approach and has some really thoughtful scriptural perspectives when it comes to ministering, and not just making it an assignment, but making it a lifestyle. How do you stimulate that culture? So I think you'll find this interview inspiring. So here's my interview with Garth Pederson. All right, Garth Pedersen, welcome to the Leading Saints podcast.

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Thanks, Kurt. It's good to be here with you. For sure.

KURT FRANCOM:

Now you are in the Phoenix area. Is there any specific area in Phoenix where you're at?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

We're in the Santan Valley, Queen Creek area.

KURT FRANCOM:

Oh, Queen Creek. Nice. Very good. Didn't they just announce a temple there, right?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Yep, they just announced a temple. Very cool.

KURT FRANCOM:

Awesome. How long is your current commute? I assume it's, is it Gilbert?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Uh, yeah, it's about 35, 40 minutes on traffic.

KURT FRANCOM:

So this will get you less than 10.

GARTH PEDERSEN:

I mean, yeah, there's a few possibilities that places that the church owns, but yeah, we're not going to know for a while.

KURT FRANCOM:

So yeah. Yeah. We know that game. So you are currently serving as elders quorum president. Is that right? Yes. Nice. And you sent me an email a few months back, basically saying, let's see, it says, I'm currently an elders quorum president, would love to discuss with you how we've moved ministering forward in our ward and the miracles we have seen in the lives of members by using the principles of ministering. If you're interested in talking about it, please let me know. And anytime I get these types of interviews where you can a quorum or a group somewhere has tried something new and it's working or tried, you know, a slightly different approach. Yeah, let's get it out there and see if we can duplicate it or help others. So maybe just start, I mean, is it pretty typical, I mean, in Phoenix or Queen Creek, it's pretty traditional ward and makeup, or how would you describe the makeup of your ward and quorum?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Yeah, it's pretty traditional. We have a lot of younger couples moving in and older couples. It kind of fluctuates a little bit because we do have some rental properties and whatnot. But for the most part, it's pretty typical of a normal ward, I guess you can say.

KURT FRANCOM:

How many elders typically show up to Elders Quorum?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

To Elders Quorum, we probably have 20 to 25. Yeah.

KURT FRANCOM:

that come to Elder's Quorum, so second hour. Awesome. And then how long have you been in this role?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Almost three years. So February will be three years. So just over two and a half years.

KURT FRANCOM:

Nice. And just approaching this, you know, ministering as a presidency, like was this something from the very beginning you tried to do something different or did you, or was it a few years in or how'd that work?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

So, yeah, I've been in leadership way too much. What I've seen in that leadership is there seems to be a lot of times a cultural disconnect with men when it comes to ministering. Right. And I've heard everything. I mean, I've had an elders quorum president after he got released in our presidency, he's like, I hate home teaching. Right. And so. Right. Because it just became a burden instead of a blessing to him in his life. And that's exactly what God doesn't want. So, you know, and you've heard everything like from, well, my ministers don't come, so I'm not going to go, or I've never had ministering happen at my house, so I'm not going to go or whatnot. And so we felt like to begin with, that that had to be a focus on what we were trying to do as a presidency from the beginning. And so what we tried to do was build a culture of different things that we had seen that didn't work. So for instance, one of the principles that we tried to implement was a culture of no shame. Because what ends up happening is a lot of times, you know, you'll get up there and be like, guys, we got to do our ministering. And I know you're right.

And so it's like this constant nagging. And if any of you are married, then you know, you hate that from your wife. So I'm not going to do it to you. And so, right, so there's this expectation almost that I have to say something about ministering all the time. And I rarely say anything about ministering directly or have like a lesson on ministering or whatever. So what I've tried to do is learn the principles myself first and foremost, right? Because I can't change their hearts. I can only change me. I can only change my attitude towards it or how I live the gospel, right? I learned that from my kids, that I can't change them. I can't change my wife. I can't change the brother. And so what I, as an elders quorum president and presidency, we have to build a culture as well as an environment where ministering can thrive. And Now, I'm not going to sit here and be like, we're amazing at ministering, or like, you know, we always get 100% ministering or something like that. That's not what, that's not what the Lord expects us right away, right? To just be like, everybody get on board and this is a miracle. And, you know, but it's, it's that line upon line, precept upon precept, just individually, I love how they've changed it from, you know, go and do these things to, you're just going to have an interview every quarter and talk about it. And to have that space where you can discuss the principles of ministering in a setting and also demonstrate to them what ministering looks like. So anyways, that's what we tried to do from the beginning. And so we discussed how do you create that environment? What are the principles that involve ministering? And then how do we go out and, and help invite them to live those principles?

KURT FRANCOM:

Yeah, so I'm trying to make sure I'm getting all the details here. So the first one was no shame, like that was in the component, like things that didn't work. Was there anything else in that as far as things you're going to avoid that didn't work?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

A lot of times what ends up happening is we'll give an assignment, and then see you in three months. Right? And we expect them, and we almost set them up to some degree to fail. Just like a child, you can't just be like, hey, six-year-old, go clean your room. and then expect them to know how to do it. And I'm not saying that we treat them like children or anything like that, but it's kind of that same mentality because there is, right, there's the natural man within each of us that has reservations, especially in our time, of interacting with people we don't know, even within the church. And so that was another thing that we heavily tried to figure out how we could better implement that. And some of the things that we found was actually in our conversation with the bishop and me and the Relief Society president, she suggested that we start inviting the brethren or the ministering sisters on visits with us. So instead of me going with my counselor to go visit a family, I would invite the ministering brothers to go with me. So I would set up the appointment. I would get, you know, I'd already be meeting with them for whatever reason. Um, and you know, you obviously got to take it case by case cause you might have financial, um,

you know, issues or privacy concerns. So you don't want to take them on every single, you know, visit. But if I was going to visit somebody, then I would take the ministering brother with me. if I could, if we could get the schedule to work out. And right, just those little tiny tweaks, those little tiny nuggets of spiritual wisdom, if you want to say, or, you know, spiritual impressions, where the Lord said, just try this. And then that leads to the next step and the next step and the next step. And I think too often we try to make this grandiose, you know, we got to change everything. That wasn't what we set out to do. We just got to make this huge, like complicated program, um, you know, or whatever. It's just like, no, what's the one thing, what can we do right now today or this week or this month or whatever it is. And let's build towards that vision that God has of a Zion people. Like we're not, we're not close to there. That's our goal. But if we don't have that vision, right, the scriptures say without vision the people perish. If we don't, if the leadership doesn't have that vision of where we're trying to get and what ministering can do, and as long as ministering is just a program, if that's what we believe it is, then we'll never understand what God's trying to teach us through ministering.

KURT FRANCOM:

Yeah. So the two, two big concepts I hear is one that the no shame, which is, which is powerful, like, and really, what does that look like? I mean, like you said, like, you just don't always bring it up, right? Sometimes it can be overdone. And, and, and sometimes if, if you're the, the Elders Quorum President or Relief Society President is always bringing up ministering, it's sort of like this, it's more about your ego as the leader, because you got to get this done. And if I don't remind you that it's going to get done, they won't get done. And you kind of hyper focus on it that way. And then the other one, I don't know if you'd frame it this way, but just that continued support of being there and not just saying, here's your assignment. We're going to talk about it here in a few months, but here's your assignment. How can we all work together to make sure people are being looked after?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Exactly. Um, you know, what the, what I felt like, because I was in the bishopric when, you know, President Nelson came into, um, uh, into his, uh, as the prophet. And, and I saw at the time, you know, they're making all these changes and making differences. It was more support. Like we're there to support you, you as the parents and as the individuals and families are to lead your family in righteousness. And we're there to support you. We're giving, we're there to give you the tools that you need. But it's your responsibility as the parent. And when, it's funny, when I, the night before I was called in to the state presidency, right, I had a prayer of, father, I need you to help me become a better father. Right? Because I was struggling with stuff with my kids, one in particular, but, with my kids, and I was just like, I need your help. I need to know how to do this better. And the next day, that's when he called me. And it has changed me. It has made me a better father. And it's because of the ministering aspect of the calling in nature. My calling isn't

to have a ministering assignment. It's to minister to everybody in the ward. and help others to do the same. But going from that support or from that kind of mentality of, oh, well, the church is going to teach that, or the Relief Society is going to teach that, or the young men are going to teach that to my kids to know that's my responsibility. No, I need to be the one that's taking on that role. I think it was a huge step for the church in not necessarily saying this wasn't the case before, but again, making that cultural change and shift. to saying, this is what's important. And this is how we should be focusing on the gospel is teaching it to our kids. You know, everybody loved taking one hour out of the church. I'm sure there were some people that didn't, but everybody loved the right, the taking the one hour and like, Oh yeah, this is awesome. And it's like, but what was the purpose, right? The purpose was to spend more time with the family. And then we see the blessings of that and the, the preparation of that through the lockdowns of COVID and whatnot. So,

KURT FRANCOM:

So we've talked sort of about these things that you're trying to avoid, like the no shaming and make sure you're offering support and things, but I mean, maybe let's back up and just tell us like, what are you doing? What have you found that's working? If you were to articulate just your approach in general to ministering as the Elders Quorum Presidency, how would you unpack that?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Yeah, so like I said, it hasn't been like, this is all the information, right? This is the path forward. But it's been a steady flow of revelation through the keys of the priesthood. And a lot of the stuff doesn't come from me, right? It's in a council, either with the Relief Society, with me and the Relief Society's president, and the bishop, or me and my counselors, right? It doesn't matter where it comes from. It's recognizing, hey, let's try that. Or yes, that's the right answer. But what we tried to implement at the beginning was one thing that I hate is like formal interviews. Right. And so I was like, I hate formal interviews. I'm pretty sure everybody else does. So I'm just going to assume that. Right, this sit down and PPI type, okay, let's all get dressed up and talk about whatever. And so what I decided to do, I tried that at the beginning. I was like, ah, this just isn't me. This just isn't working, right? I'm just not, I'm not, that's just not me. So what I decided to do, that I would go to their homes. And two things with that. I could get a feel for what's going on in their home better if I was at their home, right, because they're more comfortable, they're more relaxed, they're more used to being in their home, but also that I could show them how to minister, that I could be an example of ministering. So what I would do in those interviews, right, and they weren't really like, I don't really call them interviews, but whatever, would be to sit down with them and just see how they were doing. Right? And it didn't have to be anything long. I scheduled 10 to 15 minutes apart, and that's with driving. And just kind of interact with them and then just say, hey, how are your families doing? And, well, I'm not doing it. Right? That was a lot

of the answer at the beginning. Well, I haven't really talked to them or I haven't done anything. And so instead of saying, okay, well, you need to do this, you need to do that, and you need to do that, I would just invite them to do one thing. So three of the principles that we try to teach, um, first is pray for them. That's the first step. So if I can't visit with them or I can't have any contact with them or whatever, like for whatever reason, or I'm, I, I right now don't feel comfortable, like interacting, right. Start praying for them. Um, and And let that be the first step in your ministering journey, if you will, in the process. And then I can move from there. The next time, OK, are you praying for him? Great. What is the next step that you could take in that ministering? Well, let's get to know him. Let's communicate with him and get to know him. And so that's the second principle that we try to teach is communicating with them, whatever that is, text at church, different things like that. and then get to know them, right? Learn their story. People like telling about themselves most of the time. And get to know them, because I can't get inspiration on how I can help them if I don't know anything about them, right? I can't just start from a blank slate. I got to get to know them first and understand their situation so that I can say, OK, Lord, I think they need this, or they've said they need this. So how can I help them with that? And then thirdly is to love and serve them. Now you can do all three of those at the same time. I'm not saying it's a progression, but those are the three principles that we try to teach. And ultimately that third one is the one that we want to hone in on, that I actually feel a genuine love for them, that I actually feel that I care for them. That's what the Lord is trying to teach us through ministering. It's can you love anybody? And in the world that we live in today, you can see the erosion of that, right? People don't communicate with each other. If they are communicating, it's online. They're yelling back and forth at each other. And we're communicating past each other instead of with each other. or having a genuine care for each other. So if we want to get back to having a society to where we're connected and we feel comfortable talking to our neighbors about anything, then I have to build that relationship. And you're probably aware of this, Kurt, but guys aren't the best at relationships. That's not the highest priority on our list. Whereas sisters, relationship is a higher priority for them. So they're usually just naturally better at it. So getting them to get past that, that's one thing that we implemented was that.

KURT FRANCOM:

Awesome. I love these three things and just sort of give structure. to it all. Obviously, the praying for others, that's like, absolutely, I can do that, you know, as 100% in my control. And then communication and getting to know them, that's, you know, a little bit easier. I go, Okay, I can reach out and send a text, I can maybe stop by and, and get to know them there. The last one with love and serve, that's where I think it gets tough for it's like, well, I mean, I, I went over there, I asked them, like, is there anything that we can do for you? And they said, No, or, or, you know, I don't want to, like, push myself into their life if they don't really want me to help them something. So is anything else come to mind as far as how can we go about serving others when maybe they're not they're not necessarily wanting that, or there's not something obvious to do for Them.



GARTH PEDERSEN:

So I think we have to, and I've taught this in a lesson before, and it was probably one of the more powerful lessons that I've ever taught. And mostly, that's because I saw the change in people and referencing it, is that we have to understand what agency is. Right. And I tell the brethren, look, we're not there to force ourselves into their lives. We're there to love and support them the best we can and how they will allow us to do it. So, right, I can't come in to the relationship expecting X to happen, right? I have to come into the relationship of what I'm going to bring to the relationship, not what I'm going to get out of the relationship or what I expect them to do as a result of my actions or my agency. So, right, for instance, One thing that I've tried to do is read the scriptures in a different light as a parent. Over the last few years, I've tried to become a lot better father and focused on that with my kids, is to recognize that the scriptures aren't so much about a historical Nephi or Lehi, but it's about how God interacts with his children. And so therefore, there should be principles and doctrine and evidence of how God interacts with his children. And so I started reading the scriptures differently, and I'll give you an example. We take the account of Nephi going back and getting the plates, right? And we've all read it a million times, right? But I saw it in a different light when I started looking at it this way, and that's that The first time, they just kind of cast lots. It's kind of like chance. I mean, they believe that God divinely would inspire that kind of a thing, right? That was just in their culture. So that's where they started. They just started there. And that, we see how that didn't work out, right? And then the second was, okay, well, maybe we can buy them from him, right? Or we can bribe him or whatever they whatever. So they tried that, right? Again, a part of their culture and our culture, right? We would think we could might be able to do that. But anyways, and then the third time it was, you know, let the Lord guide you where to go. But in that I, I recognize we're forgetting a character in this story that we never talk about. And that's Laban. So perhaps the reason that it took those three tries, that the Lord didn't guide them the whole time, was to give Laban mercy, to give Laban agency. Because the Lord knew that at the end of the third try, what was going to happen to Laban? He was going to lose his life. But the Lord in his mercy gave him two opportunities to choose to give up the plates. And so I began to start looking at the scriptures differently. And I think we have to look at ministering differently, as opposed to, I failed, to I gave them an opportunity to exercise their agency. I gave them an opportunity to let a servant of the Lord into their home, or to just talk to them, right? And I've seen that over time, as the Lord says, right, that our job is to keep ministering to them, keep loving them, keep inviting them, because you never know when their heart will change and they'll come and turn back to me and they will be healed. So our obligation, our duty as a minister or any calling really, just as a parent, right, you can apply all this to being a parent, is to give them opportunities to use their agency to do righteous things and let the Lord then heal them and change Them.

KURT FRANCOM:

Yeah, that's, that's fantastic. I love that perspective of that that story, you know, in first Nephi, because maybe, maybe for decades, right, the Lord was working on Laban's heart to be like, Hey, why don't you be humble and, and listen to my voice and because there'll come a time when I need you to hand over this record to this, this random guy named Nephi, but he didn't get there, right? Because of his own choices or whatever. And so it came down to it of like, I've been working with Laban, but at the end of the day, he gets to pick the life that he leads. And he's sort of in this place of he's lost heart, he's wicked, and he doesn't, he wants to kill people, right? And so the Lord will figure out a way that way. But to recognize there's agency in this, right? Like Laban was his own entity that was functioning on his own choices. And that's sort of how the story ended up, right? Anything else with give them opportunities to exercise their agency? I mean, you just talked about that, but anything else there that we need to hit on?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Just that idea of recognizing that they do have agency, that we can't force them into this. Doctrine and Covenants 121 teaches us the principles of using the priesthood or any power or authority. And it's interesting to me that the first principle isn't love. that's listed, you would think that that would be the first principle listed, right? Or or anything else, it's actually persuasion. And so a lot of times we think, Oh, well, I told them, right? Or I, I said something, or I gave a lecture, or, you know, I'm sure you've probably seen this with your kids, right? I've told you a million times to not do that, or whatever. It's like, you're just not getting it. Right. And, and so I found the best way to persuade people is for me to learn it better, for me to make sure that I have the spirit with me, and to live it better, and then show other people that this is possible. Because if I can do it, like I'm just a normal dude that has no idea what he's doing. I just, right, I'm just trying to live this life the best I can and follow the Lord just like anybody else. But persuading them that they can do it. I think a lot of times it's layman and Lemuel. I mean, they see an angel, right? Going back to the same story. They see an angel, and yet what do they do? The first thing they complain and, you know, say, oh, well, What can God do? They had no faith. They didn't believe. They never believed. That was their problem. Their problem wasn't knowledge. Their problem wasn't a testimony or a witness. It wasn't an experience. It was that they didn't have faith in any of that stuff, at least that was lasting enough to change Them.

KURT FRANCOM:

Yeah. Then another dynamic that comes to mind with this concept of agency and recognizing that those we minister have agency and they can let us into their life or not. And if they don't, it's not that they're like Laban and a bad person or whatever, but I think another thing is, not only agency, but like people just have different life dynamics, right, that maybe they're, they're in a really busy phase of life. And, you know, people coming over to their house or ministering or, you know, them looking for ways to serve. It's like, ah, that's just one more thing I got to figure out. And I think the trap comes is from the leadership standpoint, when We as Elders quorum

Presidents or Relief Society Presidents, when we sort of attach our ego to that ministering interviews number, like I am going to be 100% ministering interviews person, and if this doesn't happen, then there's something wrong with my leadership, when in reality, you probably know this better than others that some people are hard to sort of nail down and sit down with or have that informal or formal ministering interview. And then you get to the end of the quarter, you're like, Ah, I fell short when in reality, it's like, that's okay. You know, I don't know, I sometimes I, we hyper invest in that one sliver of our, our role because there's a number attached and it's like in the system and like, everybody's going to see at least that, you know, those that the powers that be will see it. Right. So that comes to mind with agency that, that may mean that you're not going to be that a hundred percent leader on paper.

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Yeah. And again, it goes back to this, no shame. I can't shame myself either. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Shame is, is, is Satan's greatest tool. Right. I can't, I can't shame myself into, ah, I didn't get a hundred percent. Like, it should motivate me, yes, right, to be like, okay, well, how can I better connect with this individual? Right, again, how can I minister to them? Because honestly, there's brethren that, you know, I can never get to sit down and interview with them, right? Or I can never go to their house. So it's over text or, right? But am I inviting them to do something more than what they were doing before? And that's what the Lord, right, with the young rich man is he's inviting him to do something that he wasn't doing before. And obviously he rejects that, but we can't let that become as if we're failing. Right? We see things so linearly, we have a hard time seeing the all-encompassing eternal perspective. Now, I have to understand that my role isn't to change them. I'm not to be their savior, right? I'm not to be the one who does everything for them or, right, they have to do it with the Lord. And so I have to understand, well, even if I don't do the best that I can do, or maybe I fail myself, I would say the Lord will provide a perfect opportunity for each of his children to accept or reject the gospel. I have to believe that because otherwise he's not a loving God. Otherwise he's a respecter of persons. right? Everybody will have an opportunity to accept it, whether that's in this life or the next life, whether that's because of something I said or did or the next elders quorum president or the next elders quorum president right I have to I have to try to be striving to help them and invite them to come closer to Christ that has to be my goal and the only goal that I have whether they take that and run with it and allow him to heal them and change them and be that blessing in their life I can't do that and I can't I can't control that process. I think too often we try to control the process of the Lord. We try to say, Oh, if I just do this, like, if I just pray, then he'll answer me. And it's like, guys, that's not what the scriptures teach. Yes, he can answer me, and he can give me revelation. But he also said to Oliver Cowdery, all you thought was to ask me. You didn't even try to do anything to translate, right? You didn't even try anything besides just asking. And I see so many people that have left the church, and they're like, you know, I prayed about it, and God didn't give me an answer, and so I left. And it's like, but that's not the fullness of the gospel. That's just one aspect of the gospel. Christ teaches, ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. And I found in my own life, usually you have to do all three of those things to finally get the revelation, to finally get the answer, to finally be

open enough to say, it doesn't matter the outcome, Lord. I just want what's best for myself or my family or my ministering families or whatever it may be, that we just open our hearts and have that contrition, right, to repent when we need to, but that I just want what the Lord wants. that His will will be done. I think too often we try to put the process into a box instead of let the Lord do His process with us, because each of us individually needs something different. Like, I can't expect my experiences, like I can't say, well, if you just had my experiences, then therefore you would understand like I do, or you would have the testimony I do, or you would do what I do, right? And that's just not how it works. It has to be individual, one-on-one, and we have to let the Lord do his process, and want and have a desire, right? Doctrine and Covenants section four, if any of you have a desire to do the work, then what? Then go and do and become like Christ. Be diligent, be faithful, be loving, be charitable, all those different attributes. Start implementing those in your life and as people that really want those things, they will see that light in you. They will see the light of Christ in you and they'll recognize it because they've seen it before. And the funny thing is, it's in each of us. So they've seen it within themselves. They've seen it in other people. And that's what Christ is trying to teach us, right? When he says, to be the light on the hill. That it's not about me. It's about showing that the principles and the doctrines and the attributes of Christ can change someone. And you'll have more success in missionary work. You'll have more success in ministering or whatever, because people will resonate with that and see it. Now, again, you can't gatekeep the process. but it's the best way I know how in my own life to show other people that this does actually work. That it's not just a concept or a theology or you know a doctrinal belief or whatever, but it's actually something that benefits my life and when I implement it, it has practical real application that blesses me.

KURT FRANCOM:

Yeah, nailed it. Garth, this has been really, really insightful. And I think you're, you're very thoughtful about all these principles in your approach and things. Any other concept or principle that we maybe should have hit on harder or what comes to mind? Anything we missed?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Yeah, so some of the other things that we've principles that we try to do was we saw that a lot of people were having difficult just that initial interaction. Right. And I think it's, more so in our time, that people just have like this disconnect socially. It's socially awkward, like we haven't implemented it great with home teaching or ministering beforehand, so it's just kind of this awkward phase that can happen. And so two things that I'd like to talk about that we've implemented, and again, this may not work for every ward right there's there's always going to be circumstances where the principles or the things that you implement just aren't working but um but find out what the lord has for you again it's his process allow him to to guide you and direct you and so two things that we tried to do is we'd never make an assignment until we had met the person and like talked to them um or at least we tried to right we could 100 couldn't do

that but That way we got to know them. So if somebody moved in, we'd go visit with them and get to know them, and then we'd assign them a family or a ministering brother so that we could say, okay, this person has, right, the more information you have, the better revelation you're going to get. The Lord just isn't going to just give you all the answers. That's just not how it works. And so what we tried to do was get to know them the best we could and try to say, OK, well, who would be a good pairing? And that was part of the part of the talking it out would be, OK, who together would work well together? Who wouldn't work well together? Who can't we put together, right? And just all the information and just let that sit out on the table and let that guide the process in giving people opportunities to serve and bless the lives of others and try to find commonality. And secondly, the second thing was we tried to give everybody an active family. Because what I found in my time in leadership in bishoprics and elders from presidencies in the past was a lot of times they never saw the fruit of ministering or home teaching. A, a lot of them weren't doing it. But then when they did do it, it was just like, door slammed in your face, don't contact me, you know, or like, we don't need any help or whatever they had a hard time connecting with. And so one of the things we tried to make it not easy, but the probability, I guess you could call it, of success higher. And so we gave every companionship at least one family that they could see at church, that was there pretty much at least once a month or every week or whatnot, that was actively going to church. That way they could say, hey, I see that person every week, right? And that's a reminder, hey, I need to talk to them or I need to get to know them, right? And that reminder, again, going back to the me not shaming them and just, hey, you guys need to do your home teaching or visiting or ministering or whatever every week or every month or whatever, like get your visits in or whatever. But that reminder that they would see them and that they could have interaction with them on a weekly or monthly basis just by being at church together. So that was one of the other things that we try to do in pairing up companionships And then this last year, what we've been doing as far as trying to build those relationships and helping them have success, is we started implementing what's called ministering night. And so what we decided to do, and in most cases, what we'll do is if we come up with something as an elders quorum presidency, we'll go to the Relief Society in our meetings every month, and we'll be like, hey, this is what we're planning on doing. Do you guys want to get on board with us? You don't have to. We're going to move forward with it anyways. Do you want to do this together? And most of the time, they're like, yeah, we want to do that together. And so what we decided to do, And we don't do it every month. So like, we're not doing the next couple of months, just because it's hard to find people at home because the holidays and whatnot, but and during the summer because people are gone. But every month on the fourth Sunday, and that's just what we decided, we'll invite ministering brothers to come with us. So I'll text them be like, Hey, we're going to we want to go visit some of your families. Can you come with us? And 90% of the time they'll come. And so, um, we started this in January and, and it's just like 30, 40 minutes. And most of that's travel time. So instead of like, okay, we're going to go in and we're going to visit and get in the house. It's just like, just go to their door and just talk to them for like five minutes. That's it. If they invite you in and you have time, sure, go in. Go visit with them if you can, if you have time. But if not, just be like, hey, yeah, we're going to visit some other families. We'd love to come back and visit you again and start that conversation. And the first time we did that, the miracle started happening. I took a brother out that's pretty shy, not talkative a lot, had a hard time interacting with people. And so we took

him out and he actually had three families that weren't inactive for some reason, but we went to one family that had been inactive and we knocked on the door. And we had been trying for a long time to really interact with this family. They're an awesome family. I served in the bishopric with them. He was the executive secretary. Just an awesome guy. Always did his calling, but they just weren't coming to church after COVID. And we had a hard time getting them at the door or contacting with them. And he answered the door, and we just had a five-minute conversation about life, how things were going. And that was it. That was the experience. And then we went to the next family, and they didn't answer the door. And that was fine. You're going to have that. And then we went to the next family. And this is a guy who I've never met before. They've never come to church, right? We knock on the door. And this is kind of the conversation that ensued. Hey, is so and so here? He's like, yeah, that's me. What are you doing here? Right? He came at it very like, like, what are you doing? Like, very antagonistic, like, not so much curious, but like, Why are you guys here? Right? Kind of a thing. And, right, we just explained to him why we were there and whatnot. And he's like, well, who sent you? And I'm like, dude, really? Nobody sent us. I just asked him to come. And yeah, it was just random luck of the draw. But as I, we started to converse with this brother who still has his records on the church. So he's still technically a member. We began to talk with him again, just for like four or five minutes, but you just saw that attitude melt away to where, right, we started just saying why we were there. Hey, we're just here to support you, to see how you're doing, check up on you, just in a neighborly Christian way. And he would, at the end, he expressed gratitude for that. Even though he didn't want to go to church. Again, ministering isn't a program, it's a way of living. It's how God interacts with us. And so anyways, through that interaction, we could have a conversation. And I said, would it be okay if we came again sometime, like in a couple months or something? He's like, yeah, sure. It went from this, like, what the heck are you doing at my doorstep at 7.30 at night on a Sunday, to, yeah, that's actually a great idea. And we made it into, we're just trying to be good neighbors. We're not trying to convert you. We're not trying to get you to come back to church. And if that's the goal, if the goal is just, I want to get you baptized, or I want to get you back to church, we've lost what Christ was trying to teach. And that is, no, I just want to love you. I just want to care for you. I want to do what I can for you. And we've lost that in our society. And I think through ministering, we can get that back, not just in the church, but in our society.

KURT FRANCOM:

I love those stories and just the, again, this all comes from maybe a more intentional way of, like you mentioned, this ministering night where every fourth Sunday, you're going to call some guys and say, let's go visit your families and away you go, right? So I assume, you know, just getting to the technicalities of this, each one of your counselors is also going out with a ministering pair, right? And then visiting their families.

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Yeah, so how logistically it works is we'll just ask some brethren if they can go. And I never ask people if they're willing to go. I say, are you available to go? Because each of us sits at the sacrament table and partakes of the sacrament and says we're willing. So I take those covenants seriously and sacred. And so I assume You're doing the same. And so I don't say, are you willing to go with me? I say, are you available to go and do this or whatever? So I'll ask, you know, I'll say who my counselors are available, my secretary, who's available. And I'll say, okay, three of us are available. Right. And it's just kind of who's available again, not to say you have to be there or whatever. So if we have two of us, then we'll all get two people to go with us. If we can get both of the brethren to go, both of the companionship to go, then maybe we'll try to get another person to come and just have them go on their own instead of us going with them. And we've done that a number of times. But anyways, so we'll ask a few people to go and who can ever go, then we'll go with them. And then the sisters will ask some people to go on it. It can get kind of mixy because, you know, you don't want to ask somebody who's going to go, like the same two people, because they might minister to the other person. So they won't be home at the same time. So it can be a little bit of juggling there to make sure that you're not getting people crisscrossing and not finding each other at home. But I've found that from this experience, and I asked them afterwards, I'm like, what do you think? What did you think about it? And all of them are like, this is great because I have a hard time getting that first step, getting to know them or whatever. And so this is a great opportunity to do that and to start that relationship. And again, we're just there to support them. Um, and we, what we usually do is we'll meet at my house. Um, and then we'll have a prayer and we'll explain to them what we're doing instead of just making this blind thing. Like, look, we're here to support you. We're here to help you guys in ministering. If you guys need us to come with you, you know, whatever it is, we want to help you and support you. And, and then we have a prayer and then we just go. And then, and we found that that has like, broken through those barriers of the culture, as well as, and not just the culture in the church of having a hard time with ministering, but also just the cultural aspect of we have a hard time interacting with people face-to-face.

KURT FRANCOM:

Really good stuff, Garth. I'm glad that you're trying these ideas and that you're willing to share them and hopefully others will be inspired by this as well. So do we hit it all? Any other principle you want to make sure we squeeze in here before we wrap up or do we do all right?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

Just that, again, going back to this idea of teach the principles and live the principles over the process. A lot of times people ask me, you know, why don't people do ministering or Why is it so difficult? And I used to fumble around, kind of trying to explain it. And it never felt right. It was always something vague or something that, yeah, it applied to some people, but not to everybody. And as I've thought about that, what I've come to the conclusion of is, it's really just

the natural man within each of us. And it depends on what my limitation is. And it goes back to the idea of agency, that agency isn't just choices, but we're also making perceptions. So if I perceive that, oh, ministering doesn't work, or I don't like ministering, or I have a hard time ministering because I'm an introvert, if I have that perception, then I'm going to have a harder time getting past that perception in order to do it or to feel like I'm succeeding at it or whatever. Part of that interview or part of that teaching the principles is getting down to perhaps what's blocking them from ministering. They might give you an excuse, but that might not be what's actually underneath that's blocking it. um what's actually uh preventing them from feeling like they could do this because uh kurt you've probably seen this in your own life um especially recently with um all the hurricanes that feeling of i want to help yeah that feeling of i want to be a blessing to other people We've all felt that in our lives. It's there. It's part of our divine nature as sons and daughters of a divine God. But something called the natural man blocks that. And it usually only comes out in those rare circumstances where it's a friend who has cancer. or a friend who's going through a death, or a friend who just had a tragedy. And so that part of us is in there, and I've seen it in so many people. I've seen it in everybody in our ward, and I know it's there. And part of what ministering does is it helps us let go of the natural man. and say, I can love and care for somebody despite if they're going through a tragic experience and just in their day-to-day life, right? And that's what the Lord's trying to do with us is to get us to love and care for each other all the time, instead of just have that feeling of love and care when things are difficult. and i don't remember if it's in third nephi or helaman but the lord basically says and i'm paraphrasing um you know if i don't send death and i don't send um tragedy and i don't send war and i don't send all these difficult things you won't remember me you won't think about me and and on the other flip side of that you won't remember each other right so in essence those Difficult things in our life are a reminder to us that we do love and care about each other, right? You take 9-11, you take other cultural aspects or events that have happened and how we came together and how we accomplished different things. Or just recently with the hurricanes of people just pouring out this love and support to these people that they don't even know, right? But I have to be able to do that with my neighbor. I have to be able to do that with some guy that I have now on my ministering assignment, and I hate that. I have to learn how to love and care for that person regardless of their circumstances, regardless of my circumstances, regardless of what's happening in my life or what's happening in their life. And as we do that, that's how we build Zion. That's how we become a Zion people. That's how we turn our hearts towards our Heavenly Father and our Savior Jesus Christ. And in turn, they will turn our hearts towards our brothers and sisters, whether they hate us, whether they persecute us, whether they're our own kids, whoever it is. That's what the Lord is trying to teach us through ministering, is to love one another and for it to become a way of life as opposed to an assignment or a program or whatever. Because we can change the name to whatever you want. We can change the details. Again, it's about the principles of the gospel, especially those attributes of Jesus Christ that help us to love and serve one another.

KURT FRANCOM:



All right, Garth, last question I have for you is as you reflect on your time as a leader, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

GARTH PEDERSEN:

So what I what I tell people about leadership is leadership is easy. Now, let me clarify. That doesn't mean it's not difficult, or there's a lot of things to do, or there's a lot of sacrifice. What it means is to me, and what I've seen is the opportunities to serve and love others are abundant. And so we watch people come back from missions, right? We watch people after their time serving as bishop or stake president, and we notice that they've changed, right, a lot of times. We notice that they're more spiritual, that they love and care for one another more. We see these changes in them, And yet I think a lot of times we equate that change to the calling or the assignment. And what it really boils down to is they've been given more opportunities maybe than the rest of us to love and serve those around them. So in that aspect, it's easy to be a leader because you're constantly being given opportunities to serve and to love. And ultimately, by doing those things, you come closer to the Savior. And it's the atonement that changes you. It's not the mission. It's not the calling. But it's the Lord Jesus Christ and his atonement, right, that changes that natural man within each of us to make us become more like him. And so what I've learned as a leader is that if I will look for those opportunities, even when I'm not a leader, I can still have that same change and I can still have those same blessings. And so it's made me a better follower because it's helped me recognize that no matter how long my calling is, I can always be a follower of Jesus Christ and bless the lives of other people.

KURT FRANCOM:

And that concludes this, how I lead interview. I hope you enjoyed it. And, uh, I would ask you, could you take a minute and drop this link in an email, on social media, in a text, wherever it makes the most sense and share it with somebody who could relate to this, this experience. And this is how we, how we develop as leaders, just hearing what the other guy's doing, trying some things out, testing, adjusting for your area. And, uh, that's. That's where great leadership is discovered, right? So we would love to have you share this with somebody in this calling or a related calling, and that would be great. And also, if you know somebody, any type of leader, who would be a fantastic guest on the How I Lead segment, reach out to us. Go to [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) contact. Maybe send this individual an email letting them know that you're going to be suggesting their name for this interview. We'll reach out to them. See if we can line them up. So again, go to [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) contact, and there you can submit all the information and let us know. And maybe they will be on a future How I Lead segment on the Leading Saints podcast. Quick reminder, go watch Joseph Grenny's presentation on helping loved ones overcome addiction by going to [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. And when the declaration was made concerning the only true and living church upon the face of the earth, we were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership. from which we cannot shrink nor run away, and to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.