



## **How the Temple Motivates Latter-day Saints | A How I Lead Interview with Brent Holladay**

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Kurt Francom:

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when it got some traction and took off. In 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. This is another How I Lead episode on the Leading Saints podcast, and this is a calling that we haven't done very many episodes of. In fact, we probably should do more of these, but that is with a temple president. That's right, we talked with Brent Holladay, who is the temple president, just released of the Orlando, Florida temple, and he has so many phenomenal stories. This episode is, I mean, you get the price of a mission just for the stories, the narratives he tells in here as far as how the temple has impacted people. And when you're a temple president, you get a front row seat to some of these things, to see that people coming and going every day to worship God in these holy edifices, and it changes them. The temple is a powerful place, and that's why I'm so inspired by President Nelson's effort to, it seems like, put one on every corner in the world. and hopefully drive people to the temple. So there's also a phenomenal activity he asked us to do that's related to motivation. What motivates people? There's an activity in here that you could do with a quorum, a Relief Society, a ward, a family, to help them become a little more motivated, right? A few weeks ago, I did an episode about motivation and leadership. Is it really possible? Can you motivate people? The temple is a very motivating place. And so Brent gives us a phenomenal activity to do that. Talks about the management of the temple. I think he said 12, 1300 temple workers at one time working there with a temple recorder and, you know, how to make sure that things are running smooth while at the same time making sure that people are having positive experiences. So phenomenal episode. You're going to enjoy it and enjoy all the stories. So here's my interview with Brent Holladay, the former president of the Orlando, Florida temple. I want to welcome Brent Holladay to the podcast. How are you?

Brent Holladay:

I'm doing great. Thank you, Kurt.

Kurt Francom:

Now, you are in Orlando, Florida, just recently released as the Temple President of the Orlando Temple. Is that right?

Brent Holladay:

That is correct. When the Orlando, Florida went into a long-term closure, my wife and I were released as Temple President and Matron.

Kurt Francom:

And are they refurbishing it or what's happening to it?

Brent Holladay:

They are. It is a more extensive refurbishment than they originally thought it would require. And therefore, you know, they released this. And after a year or however long it takes, more than a year, when it reopens, they'll call a new temple president.

Kurt Francom:

Gotcha. So during this time of refurbishment, they mainly just rely on the temple department and maybe local authorities if something comes up, right?

Brent Holladay:

And it's really the construction side of the temple department or the church that's taken over There.

Kurt Francom:

Nice. Interesting. So I'm curious, what's the story behind being called as a temple president? That's something that not too many people experience.

Brent Holladay:

Ooh, that is interesting. In fact, I'll share having served as a stake president, there's some interviews, you know, that people might get with general authorities. And I always refer to them

as a one and out. And that's what I thought we had had. We had a member of the area presidency that approached us in December. And we had what I thought was a one and out interview because I wasn't really in a position to serve as a mission president. And my wife's mother was living with us. We were taking care of her. And so it's kind of like, well, that's kind of it. It was nice, a nice interview. But then suddenly in January, we get a call from President Oaks' office. President Oaks would like to talk to you. And so I set up a time that's convenient for us to speak to him. And immediately afterwards, when you start feeling the anxiety, okay, what's this going to be about? It's kind of like, oh, boy, I should have chosen the earliest available time so we can get this over. Because we had no idea. But essentially, President Oaks spoke with me and my wife, talked about similar things of availability and that. And despite the fact that my wife's mother continued living with us while we were serving at the temple, he then called us to serve, what he said, full-time church service as the temple president and matron of the Orlando Temple.

Kurt Francom:

Awesome. And then I would imagine the process of choosing counselors is maybe similar to what you experienced as a stake president. But I mean, yes, suddenly you can pick from a whole temple district, I imagine of potential counselors, right? So how did that go?

Brent Holladay:

And they do they want us to submit names of people who are in the temple district. We went through an interesting situation where one person that we had proposed that had been approved ended up having a help situation that made it that he was not able to serve. So I ended up, we ended up submitting another name of somebody immediately when we found that out. My wife and I looked at each other and we said, let's call this other person to be the counselor and his wife and he had just come back home from serving as a mission president. And anyway, it was just a wonderful experience. Those names are submitted. They're actually cleared by the temple department and then submitted to the area presidency. And the area presidency is the one that issues those calls. And then in this case, I actually set them apart and conferred the sealing authority on them as part of that setting apart with a direct the type of letter of delegation that is, you and you only can do this, and this is how it's done.

Kurt Francom:

And who set you apart?

Brent Holladay:

Elder Bowen, who was serving in our area presidency at the time, and that was basically a change from when all of the temple presidents and matrons would travel out to Salt Lake City. We were still in the part following COVID where they were not meeting with everybody out in Salt Lake City. So he was delegated that authority to set me apart as temple president, my wife as matron. And then we received all of our training online, which was a benefit because we were able to include the counselors and the assistants to the matron in the training. And they would give us times that we could sit and talk about, how are we going to do this? They just trained us on this. How do we want to do this? And that was just an amazing experience to get to do that.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And so typically, like now that we're past COVID and more open, so all the newly called Temple Presidents come to Utah for some type of training?

Brent Holladay:

Is that how it works? How I understand that it is working starting this year, this last year, this last fall, is they all receive the same training that we did as Temple President Matron counselors and assistants to the Matron in the end of August, right before they began their service on September 1st. But now the temple presidents and matrons again travel out to Salt Lake City, but they do it in conjunction with the October conference. So they again have that meeting out there where they receive some direct conversation and training and direction from the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Temple Department.

Kurt Francom:

Gotcha. And then I would imagine it's typical that maybe a member of the Quorum of the Twelve sets them apart as the Temple President?

Brent Holladay:

No, they would be set apart before they started serving in September. So I'm assuming that is still like it is. Okay. So where there was the day that members of the Twelve set apart all the Temple Presidents, I'm thinking that they're all now being set apart through that specific delegation to a member of the Area Presidency.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, makes sense, for sure. So when you, so you're called, you have your counselors and did, so did you have somewhat of a familiarity with your counselors? Or were you going sort of off a broader list as you were picking and seeking that inspiration or?

Brent Holladay:

You seek inspiration, and on one of them, it's somebody that my wife and I knew very well, the one that was called after the one had a health issue. But on the other counselor, it was somebody that I knew, and I had met him on several occasions, so I kind of knew him, but that was one of those revelation things. In fact, my wife and I, went to the temple, chose the day that we're going to the temple to really pray over who should be that particular counselor and assistant to the matron. And lo and behold, I run into him. So I'm able to introduce him to my wife, so she has the chance, opportunity, the tender mercy, as we would call it, opportunity to meet him. And that helped lead to that, yes, this is the right person to call as a counselor.

Kurt Francom:

Awesome. So you're called, you're set apart, you go through this training, and how would you describe it as far as, I mean, you see, you know, as patrons go to the temple, they see maybe a member or two of the temple presidency or the matrons, and they, you know, maybe they're going through with somebody for the first time, so that you're interacting a little bit there, but how would you articulate, like, what is it that you do as a temple president or a temple presidency?

Brent Holladay:

Okay, and this is where every temple presidency is going to differ. For us, we're there to bring the love of the Savior to the people that are coming there, and to make sure that they have wonderful patron experiences. There are those administrative things that you need to make sure run correctly. There is training. You have assistants. You have coordinators for shifts. You have all these wonderful people to make the temple work. So you're about making the experience right and making sure that things happen the way they should. And again, as temple president, holding the keys One of us, we always worked at where one of us of the temple presidency was always there while ordinances were being performed. So that's part of our responsibility too.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, and you're just making sure that ordinances are being done, you know, as they should and everything's in line that way, right?

Brent Holladay:

And little things will come up and then we work with the recorders in the temples to determine how do we resolve this and where necessary we bring in the temple department. And there are ways to, there's one way or the other that you can fix pretty much anything that might happen.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, sure. You mentioned the temple recorder. That's, that's, that's actually like someone that's hired as their employment, right, that they're paid and given the salary to be the temple recorder. Is that accurate?

Brent Holladay:

That is now accurate. At the time we were called small temples, one of the counselors was actually given the responsibility to act as temple recorder. And as temples have gone throughout the world now, I think they're pretty much filling every temple with a paid temple recorder, which is such a blessing because there really are administrative details that you need that expert. And we always brought our recorder in with us into our presidency meetings. And having that expertise was just invaluable. We used him very much and trusted him greatly.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And I would imagine the temple recorder, I mean, they're more familiar with like the processes of the church or the temples and how ordinances get recorded and things like that so that they can kind of keep you in line as far as the policies and procedures go, right?

Brent Holladay:

And whenever there's a question, we would ask them. Of course, we have the handbooks and we'd read the handbooks, but there are always things that came up or, boy, we want to accomplish this type of a thing. How are we going to do that? And we would go to the recorder

and get his, we had one who had a vast amount of experience in several temples prior to coming to the Orlando Temple. So he had some great wisdom and insight that helped us a lot.

Kurt Francom:

Awesome. Awesome. And is the recorder the only like paid position typically in the temple?

Brent Holladay:

No, there are some others, depending upon the temple. The Orlando Temple was the second largest temple in floor space size, east of the Mississippi, with only Washington, D.C. being larger. And a lot of the newer temples are a lot smaller. So depending upon the size of the temple and number of patrons, that determined the size of a paid staff. But essentially, we had a couple of office workers and some laundry workers. as well as some security people, which are needed, and some maintenance people. And that might differ by temple, but those were the ones that we had.

Kurt Francom:

Interesting. Fascinating. Another question I have is just with how many temple workers, like volunteer temple workers, did you have at one time?

Brent Holladay:

Our good number was 1,200. And that was the number when we came in, it was still after COVID, we had 800, which meant that we ran some pretty thin shifts. And I'd been an ordinance worker before serving and calling as temple president. So I understood what it was like having a thin shift. Many of the small temples range from 400 to 500, maybe 600 workers, and that's enough. But you go out to Utah, many of the temples out there might have 5,000 workers in them. But for Orlando, the way that we operated, and we did pretty much have sessions going on Tuesday night, all day Wednesday, all day Thursday, all day Friday, and morning and afternoon on Saturday. There are a few temples away from Utah that really run that many sessions as we did, but it worked out perfect for us. And that was the right amount of workers for us.

Kurt Francom:



Yeah. Yeah. I'm curious. I don't know. I want to ask this in a fair way, but sometimes as you attend the temple, Um, you kind of get a feel for the culture of the temple workers there, how it's run. And obviously the temple is full of like administrative steps, right? Even down to ordinance steps, as far as like you say this, and then you say this, and then you do this. And so sometimes it can, this culture can creep up on you where it's all about the process, all about crossing the T's, dotting the I's, which to some extent is important. But as a temple presidency, you're also balancing that with having a positive experience, a loving experience for those who attend and experience there. And sometimes they can maybe, you know, they're not as familiar with this or that process, and they're, you know, quickly corrected to the point where they feel like, I think my hand was just spiritually slapped, like everything. So anything come to mind is like, how do you manage that to a point that you're making sure that the experience of the temple is something people want to keep coming back to.

Brent Holladay:

We were fortunate because the church, several years ago, set out a path to really focus on that patron experience. And that was a big thing that we really worked with all of our workers on. And we feel that we made some progress there. And just a quick story related to that, I knew we'd made some progress one day when my sister-in-law, my wife's sister and her husband had been to the temple. And after their session, they were talking to us and my sister-in-law looked and said, Boy, you know, that was just a wonderful experience. My husband and I, it used to be when we'd leave the temple, we'd look at each other and say, what did you get in trouble for today? But today, we left and there were none of those experiences. And so I think that focus is there. We ask patrons to be patient with us. as we strive to do it. And some workers are a lot better than than others. But I think that overall, we're finding the temples to all of the temples to focus a lot more on making that a wonderful experience. And one of the things I'll share is the leadership principle. We'll, we'll talk about that a little bit more.

Kurt Francom:

Awesome, awesome. Well, I'm definitely kind of going past those a little bit. So let's jump into those. And Obviously, as we talk about these principles, if there's a story or an application outside of your time as a temple president, maybe as a stake president or just in life, feel free to go there. But your first principle is loving as the Savior loves, seeking the gift of charity.

Brent Holladay:

And that's right. I look at it, and one of the other callings, we never talked about things like this, but one of the other callings I had after being released as stake president was as a patriarch, and I became inactive when I became temple president. But one of the things you do as a

patriarch, you look at those blessings. You're looking at those blessings, and I find that some of the specific words in different blessings are key, and that's what's really different from one person to another. But you also see repeated themes. And one of the repeated themes I saw in patriarchal blessings was talking about the gift of charity and having charity. how people needed charity. And I really just feel that with the youth of today and the church today, that's a big thrust. And we all talk about charity. And even though I could talk about that, I had an experience, and this is even, boy, it wasn't even before I served as stake president. My wife, this is back in the days of home teaching, visiting teaching, and my wife was called to be the visiting teacher in this particular fairly recent convert who had just moved into our stake. And she had some needs. She needed somebody to come in and help fix up a couple of things in her apartment. And so my wife brought me in a couple of times, and I would just kind of go with her. And, you know, I'm just there. But one day, all of a sudden, this sister turned to me and said, Brent, you are the first man that I have ever felt comfortable around. And as I contemplated that, and as I got to know her, here's a sister who had been, by the men in her life, be it relatives, be it siblings, be it fathers, stepfathers, had been abused in about every way that might be possible. And it all of a sudden gave me the insight And as you work in these positions, and you'll know this too, you find out that she's not by herself out there in the world. There are many that have had very negative experiences with men. And the thought came to my mind, how can a sister like this come to understand the concept of a loving father in heaven, when this is the type of experiences she's had with men? I had somebody else whose husband had been abused by his father, and it was even similar in that case. How could that brother understand the concept of a loving father in heaven with the things that he had sacrificed, or been through, excuse me, the things that he had been through? And I think that that's the key. As we think of charity, many of these people will not come to know the Savior and our Heavenly Father and their love except through us. Another similar case that we had in the temple, we had one worker and there was this one patron who seemed to be a little bit dour. She didn't seem to have a smile on her face and one of the workers said that She would see her and she knew how much Heavenly Father loved her, but she didn't quite feel that love herself. So she prayed that Heavenly Father would show her a way or how to look at that sister like He saw her. And she had an amazing personal experience. And she went and told that sister, you know, the sister and the patron came in. And she said, I want you to know that I prayed that I might see you like our Heavenly Father sees you. And she shared that with the sister. And all of a sudden, it was like a switch turned on. And whenever we saw that patron, she was always smiling. She was like a different person. She was her true self. But it now came out to the point that Eve and I grew to just love her. She'd always say hi. She was always smiling. She was always positive. And this is one of those people that was there virtually every day in the temple from morning till night, just doing a lot of work. And I think that that's true, that Heavenly Father, many times we see people and we might assume something about them. But if we'll pray to let Heavenly Father help us to see them as He sees them, we will feel that love. And as we do, the spirit will testify, what's your feeling is how I love that person.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, I mean, like you mentioned, as leaders, sometimes we can manage a lot of people and a lot of personalities, right? And sometimes if you get stuck in that administrative mode, you miss that person and their worth and how they're loved by God. And so I love that thought of just sort of shifting yourself back into that charitable mindset of saying, you know, how can I love this person or see this person as God himself sees this person?

Brent Holladay:

Let me give another one. When I was stake president, I had a youth come in to talk to me. And as we were talking, they started sharing some things that they needed to repent of, and those types of things that would usually come to a bishop. So as the conversation went along, I kind of said to them, You know, these are things you really need to go and talk to your bishop. And they said, Oh, but President, when I come to see you, I leave feeling good. And I leave feeling uplifted. But I don't necessarily feel that every time I go and see my bishop. And I said, Well, I've been working with the bishops on that. Please give them another opportunity. And I think we do. And I think the bishops need to do that. In fact, I was just hearing an interview with Anthony Sweat in the last couple of days, and he was saying that as bishop, that he received the impression that he really needed to tell youth in particular about the love of their Heavenly Father for them and His love for them. When people leave the office, they need to feel uplifted. And that's the real point of the charity. When the Savior dealt with people, sometimes He challenged them like He did the rich young man, but we see Him just lifting people, and that's what's needed. When people deal with us, no matter what calling we're in, they need to leave feeling uplifted and feeling the love of the Savior.

Kurt Francom:

Love it. All right, the next principle is all about barometers. Teach us.

Brent Holladay:

And I'll do this one as a quick one. Okay. And let me ask you, I'm going to throw one at you. Okay. You were in a stake presidency and you received the report. What was the first thing you looked at?

Kurt Francom:

Oh, I'm trying to remember, like the key indicator report or like, I'm trying to remember what was on the report. Often it was like attendance, church attendance or sacramental attendance. Yeah, I'm not sure.

Brent Holladay:

I'll tell you mine. In fact, we have a son who's serving as a bishop right now, and he showed me that this indicator now shows up in big letters at the very top of his report. But it was the percentage of members, full percentage of members, endowed members with a current temple recommended.

Kurt Francom:

Yes, yes, that does make sense.

Brent Holladay:

That was my key barometer. And now I served as a stake clerk throughout the years for seven years. And I really learned that we need to look beyond the numbers to, what is this number telling me? What is it telling me about the people? And to me, the barometer for the stake was that percentage of endowed members with a current temple recommend. And in our temple district, we had 24 temples. And this is kind of the key point that I want to bring out of this, this particular leadership principle, is how temples going throughout the world will bless the members of the church. Because in this, as I looked at those stats, and we happen to be able to see this particular stat for all the stakes in our temple district, there were nine that were in the court, nine stakes in the coordinating council in our temple district. And I kind of hit in my mind for our area, what I set as that barometer of, this is a good, strong stake. These are the stakes that are generating the majority of our temple workers. These are the stakes that are just doing well at a different level. And of the nine stakes in that coordinating council, six of them met that. what I just said as, this is the number that I think would be good for our area. And outside of that, let's say the other 15 stakes, only two stakes in the whole rest of the temple area met that particular standard that I felt was important. And they were where temples were going to be going in the future. And as I contemplated it, I contemplated that as these temples go throughout the world, those leaders will be focusing on making sure that they have people who are endowed and helping make sure that they maintain that current recommend. And so I always tried to focus with the bishops on, you need to bring those people in, because if they don't have that current temple recommend, that's your first warning signal of, are they doing okay? And when they do have that current temple recommend, there's a lot of things that might not mean, it doesn't mean that they're not having problems in their family or anything, but it means that they're focused on making and keeping those cabinets with the temple in mind.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, yeah, that explained it. Yeah, that's awesome. That's really good. And I think it's, you know, we get caught up sometimes in, you know, trying to avoid the numbers because we don't want to make it about numbers. But these can be really powerful tools as far as like a barometer. You know, a barometer doesn't tell you everything that's going to happen with the weather the next day or in the moment, but kind of give you a sense of what's going on. And so maybe that'll guide you and some of your inspiration.

Brent Holladay:

Read behind that number. What is this telling me about the people? What is it telling you when all of a sudden somebody hasn't renewed their recommend for three months?

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, yeah. It made me think of another dynamic you experienced as a temple president where you're visiting a lot of stake conferences and often speaking at stake conferences, right? And, you know, all of us experience this. We go to the stake conference and it's not a shock when the temple president and his wife is there and, you know, he usually speaks or both of them speak. Sometimes it feels like, all right, here comes like, yeah, we need to go to the temple a bit more, you know, like, is there? How did you handle the stake conference? You know, talks and things?

Brent Holladay:

I would try to share some experiences. And some of them that would provide benefits and relief, that people would know that they're no different than anybody else. There's one and Anyway, I won't say who I think the member of the Twelve was who shared this story about somebody who was having a hard time doing the work for one of her ancestors. And it took her a year to get to the point that she felt comfortable doing that work. And after doing so, that person appeared to her. And they were dressed in white. And they had changed from what she knew them as. And there was a healing there. And whenever I would share that, and again, it wasn't my story, but we had similar experiences. And when I would share that, I always had people come up saying, I've been struggling about this ancestor. Should I do their work? Because I have these feelings about that. I had one where it's, I don't know that I want, I don't want to be sealed to my whatever it was, because they weren't a good person. And then they came back and said, but I have come to the point now that I know that that's what I need to do. And so we focused on that. Again, I won't say which member of the 12, but one of them said, if I hear you just trying to invite

people to the temple, I might get up and invite you not to speak anymore, because that's not our role. That's the stake presidents, the bishops, they work on getting the people. We work on trying to make the experience right, and get it so that they can have the experience they need. So I would share experiences of those who had come to the temple that other people Let me share another one that's related to this. It kind of goes with one of the other principles that I want to share, but I think this is the point to share it. I had a mother who came in and her son had died, like the day before, a 28-year-old son, the day before. And she came in and she wanted to just go to the celestial room. Now, we're asked to try to get it so that people should do ordinances before going to the celestial room. In fact, an endowed member that comes and does baptisms or confirmations, they can go to the celestial room after they do those baptisms or confirmations, any ordinance. You're invited to go to the celestial room. She wanted to go to the celestial room. And I said, Sister, can I share some thoughts with you? I said, I'd like to invite you to go do sealings." And then I went to section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 20, and I said, can I quote this to you? And I talked a little bit about that. And I said, in verse 20, it says, therefore, in the ordinances thereof is the power of godliness manifest. You're coming here to receive peace from something that's happened in your life. I promise you that if you will go do a few sealing ordinances first before you go to the celestial room, the power of that peace will come better into your heart, having done those ordinances." So she did. She went and did some sealings, went to the sealing room, and as happens in the temple, as she's leaving, I just happened to be there as she was leaving. And I saw her and I was able to go up and say, how was that experience? And she said, thank you for inviting me to do those sealings. That made all the difference. Then she said, and tomorrow I'm coming back to do an endowment session.

Kurt Francom:

Nice. I love it. I love it. And it's so true sometimes, you know, just last week, I was in the temple. And, you know, it's interesting, as you make it to the celestial room, it's sort of this, it can be a different feeling at times, I feel like, great, now I'm here, I can finally sit down and ponder and and pray and things. Other times, I feel like I've already communed with God so much that I don't feel like I need this lengthy moment in the celestial room, because as you're sitting in the ordinances, as you're listening to the words, as you're pondering just in that context, it can do a lot of that work. Like you said, it's just beautiful.

Brent Holladay:

So that's another story that I shared in some stake conferences, and I had people that responded to that. others that would come and say, Oh, I heard you tell that story. And I realized that's what I needed. And so we weren't inviting them to the temple, but they saw I need that same experience.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah.

Brent Holladay:

And they came and received it.

Kurt Francom:

What I like about those stories, and as you share them, especially in context of the stake conferences, it's, you know, sometimes we are too general or use too much hyperbole as we talk about the experience of being a member or temple work, like go to the temple and your life will be blessed and you'll receive power and And sometimes it's hard to connect with that. Like, what do you mean? Like, I walk out and I suddenly have more power? I'm stronger? Like, what does that mean? But I love how you articulate it. It's like, this is how it works, right? This is the promises we begin with. And this is why we do ordinances and not just go sit in a room quietly. So I think that's really helpful.

Brent Holladay:

President Nelson has talked so much about those promises. We've seen it happen in the lives of the members. And we can testify. come and what he says will happen. We see it every day as we serve in the temple.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. That's awesome. All right. Next principle is serving a mission is not one of the saving ordinances along the covenant path. Your endowment is three questions to consider with respect to any activity we do in the church. All right. I'm excited for this one. Okay.

Brent Holladay:

And this is one, again, I'm going to say on this one, Elder Bednar quoted when we were being trained. He made a quote. This is my way to kind of share what he quoted to us to make a point. And I want to be sure that we do one thing first before we go on to that. And that is that, When

he said a mission is not one of the saving ordinances along the covenant path, but your endowment is, let me ask you, what is he not saying?

Kurt Francom:

He's not saying we don't need to – we can lower the importance of a mission. It really maybe doesn't matter. He's not saying that.

Brent Holladay:

That's right. Everything we're doing with respect to a mission, we need to do. But I think what he is saying is in today's world, one of the ones I use is, I don't know if you relate back to this, but I relate back to the days when we would say, if we can get these youth to be an Eagle Scout, to graduate from seminary and get them on a mission, we've succeeded. We've done all we need to do and they're okay. That's not the world we live in today. And I can't tell you, I've had multiple women that I've talked to over the years who said, you know, I did everything right. I married somebody who was an Eagle Scout who had graduated from seminary, went on a mission, you know, came back, we were married in the temple, and now he's left me, or this has happened. What did I do wrong? Well, they didn't do anything wrong. And this is where President Nelson, again, in his message of the covenant path, has really said that. So I think the point is, we need to keep doing everything we're doing with respect to missions. But there's been a paradigm shift about the importance of the covenant path and that that will be lasting. Some will go on a mission, I've heard stories of those that come home from a mission and say, well, I did everything I needed to do. Now I can just move on with life. But I want to, again, go back to some stories to really show the difference of what I think happens when we pay more attention to the temple before people go to the temple and get them more integrated in making the temple experience and the covenant path an essential part of their life. First story, one young man who came in, and like you mentioned, all people that come to receive their endowments will meet with the Temple Presidency matron, a counselor, or an assistant to the matron before they go through the session. And that's a very distinct thing. There's a very small amount of information. They want everybody to receive the same information without variance. They don't want us to really go off. But as we do that, we have enough of an association with them to feel something about that person. So we had one young man, and I usually tried to greet him before they went through initiatory, and would speak to him just a little bit just to greet them. And then after the initiatory, I would take him in for the rest of the orientation and sit down with him. And there was one young man who was the proverbial deer with the headlights in his eyes. And so I reached over because we had the Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple books there, and we would say, hey, did you get a copy of this when you received mission preparation? And he said, no. Well, his father turns to him and said, well, you sure you didn't receive that as part of your temple prep? And he said, well, I didn't have a temple preparation class. And what's interesting is after the endowment session, after going to the celestial room, I actually happened to have the



bishop, his bishop, come up to me and said, hey, can I ask you a question? So we went to a place where we could talk and he said, you know, for the young men, we have mission prep, but we don't really have anything for the young women. And I fought a minute and I said, Can I give a quote to you? And I just gave that quote about mission not being part of the covenant path, but the endowment is. And all of a sudden, that's with him, all I needed to say and a light went on. Everybody needs that covenant path. Mission presidents will say that they see a difference between those who have not only gone to the temple, but have actually been temple ordinance workers. Elder Bednar again said, try to get these young people to serve as ordinance workers. He said if a person receives their endowments four days before they go on a mission, that's three days they can work in the temple as an ordinance worker. And we actually had some situations where that was essentially the exact case. They came shortly before they were leaving, but we were able to get them even two or three times to serve as an ordinance worker. And if not, we tried to get them to come back and spend a day in the temple. And they found that it makes a difference in the lives of those people, those that come home from the mission. You're hearing more and more stories, and we were this way too. Those young adults that were serving as ordinance workers created a different spirit in the temple, and they gave a different message to people. But the biggest thing is what it did to them in their own lives in connecting them to the Savior. and to following the covenant path. And so I think that that's the thing. We need to ground people before and after their mission in the covenant path and in making and keeping covenants, in particular in the temple.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's, that's really helpful. And, you know, I've often thought, you know, when the mission call comes, right, this, the, it's, it's, it's fun and cool to watch is, you know, the community gathers for this moment of opening the mission call and finding out and, and I have to think, man, I wish we could create that sort of buzz for the endowment or you're going to the temple, right? It's often sort of this side, the side to effort that, you know, maybe take some pictures out front after whatever, but Because that is the transformational part of this journey they're on, not necessarily where they're going to serve, right?

Brent Holladay:

That's right. So again, second story. Another young man comes in, have a small association with him, but it was a different type of an association. Get him into the room where I'm about to give this very short orientation. There was a different spirit in that room, to the point, before I did that orientation, I said, and I called him by name, and I said, there's just something different about you. I feel that you're more prepared to be here in the temple than anybody else I have met with. Could you please tell me why? He said, oh, I love the temple. Now this is a young man who with another group, some other young men and young women, on their own accord, would come to the temple regularly to do baptisms. Their parents weren't bringing them, their bishops

weren't bringing them. They just showed up almost weekly to do baptisms. And when he became, and he and his friend, when they had graduated and were ordained elders, what do you think the very first thing they wanted to do was?

Kurt Francom:

Go to the temple?

Brent Holladay:

Okay, they were just elders, they weren't in doubt, but they wanted to go there because suddenly they could now perform confirmations in the baptistry. The first thing they wanted to do was come to the temple and perform some confirmations in the baptistry. And so they did that. Now what about young women? We have young women who have prepared so that when they're 18, They've worked with their bishops and everything so that they can come and be endowed. We know that that's possible. You hear the church leaders talking more and more about this, and they're wanting to be endowed. Whether or not they're planning to go on a mission, Because they've come to also love the temple so much, and they just want to be in that experience where they, as young women, now women, can go in and lay their hands on the heads of other female patrons to perform these ordinances. And it does something in their lives, just like that young man. What is different about you?

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's powerful. Love it. So are there three specific questions that you refer to in that?

Brent Holladay:

Because of this, my wife and I contemplated this afterwards and we kind of talked about this and said, okay, I remember, boy, I'm almost nowadays embarrassed to say this, but I remember when I was counseling the stake presidency and the stake president, I think I kind of said, at some point when you're planning an activity, you need to kind of stop and say, how will this help these young men in particular to be prepared to go on missions? I now feel that there are three questions, and I think you'll relate to these questions. And I need to look, I'm going to read them here. And the first one is, and again, it's not just, I'm going to use the word activity. But my wife and I, since we've been released, my wife and I were called by our bishop to be what he calls the temple preparation teachers for the primary, 10 year olds who Some of them will now this year be going to the temple for the first time to do baptisms and confirmations. So whether it's

an activity or class, my wife and I use these same things for our class. How does this activity or lesson bring us closer to Jesus Christ? or help us to grow in testimony of Jesus Christ and of his atonement sacrifice?" It's the first question we need to ask for any activity. And I used to say, once you get the activity planned and you've done all these things you think, you then, before the activity happens, you stop and say, okay, how have we accomplished this? Or what do we need to tweak to make sure we do accomplish this? That's the number one. Number two, How does this activity help us, youth, adults, others, to prepare to make and keep the covenants of baptism, the priesthood, and the temple? See, that's the temple prep aspect of it. And then three, and I put this one third, how will this activity help us to prepare these young men, young women for missions and for the other challenges they'll face in life? so that every activity has a complement. Like I say, we do this with our class. How are we testifying of the Savior and His atoning sacrifice and helping these primary children grow in knowing who the Savior is? Two, how are we helping them to prepare for the temple and for the covenants and to keep the covenants they've made? But three, therefore, how will that correlate into the challenge they're facing? And you've had some great interviews with some great people and some great things that are happening to help them in that way with missions and other things.

Kurt Francom:

I love that. And so you're just saying any calling or anybody who's doing a function in the church could use those questions to kind of go through the process of like, are we on track here? Are we keeping the first thing the first thing, right? Exactly. Love it. Awesome. All right, should we move on to number four, covenants, including the law of consecration?

Brent Holladay:

Yes, including the law of consecration. I'm kind of looking at our time here because I wonder, can I kind of take a minute and here share a little bit or go a little bit to the general handbook of instructions?

Kurt Francom:

Sure, let's do it.

Brent Holladay:

Is it alright for me to do that? Because to do this, I want to first of all say that, you know, section, General Habit of Instructions, chapter 27.2, section .2, is called the endowment. And it starts out

by saying the word endowment means a gift. And it says what the endowment is. And then it says, and what are the gifts we receive? And it lists four. greater knowledge of the Lord's purposes and teachings, power to do all that Heavenly Father wants His children to do, three, divine direction when serving the Lord, their families, and others, and four, increased hope, comfort, and peace. We've heard the prophet talk about these. We've heard the other general authorities. These were other things that I would try to include in the talks that I would give at stake conferences. But then it goes into, it talks about the initiatory, it talks about the endowment, and then it talks about the covenants that we make. I'm going to end up focusing on one, but I'd like to kind of read through them. First covenant, and this is right in the general handbook for anybody to read and review. Number one, live the law of obedience and strive to keep Heavenly Father's commandments. Two, obey the law of sacrifice, which means sacrificing to support the Lord's work and repenting with a broken heart and contrite spirit. Number three, obey the law of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which means, and actually I'm going to skip through those, go to it and read what that means, but it's faith, repentance, so on. Number four, keeping the law of chastity, which means abstaining from sexual relations outside of a legal marriage between a man and a woman, which is according to God's law. And then five, keep the law of consecration. which means that members dedicate their time, talents, and everything with which the Lord has blessed them to building up Jesus Christ's church on earth. Now, you and I kind of got into contact this time. It was over that fifth one, wasn't it? Oh, that's right. That's right. You'd done a wonderful session on how do we help motivate people to do things, to serve. And I said, in my experiences, for me, it's come down to that fifth item there. I'm going to ask you a favor here. Bear with me if you're willing to do something. Let's do it. I'm game. Let's do it. Okay. I'd like to say, if anybody's watching this broadcast, I'm going to suggest that they turn it off for two minutes. Hit pause for two minutes. If anybody's riding in a car, I'm going to say hit pause. for about two minutes. And during those two minutes, I want them to, if they're watching, write it down. If they're in a car, just think for the next two minutes, what has the Lord asked you to do to dedicate your time, talents, and everything with which He has blessed you? What has He asked you to do in your life? And Kurt, I'm going to say, while they're taking two minutes, let's you and I take two minutes right here. And I want you to write down things, too, and I'm going to write down some things, too.

Kurt Francom:

Okay.

Brent Holladay:

All right. I can do that. So I'll kind of look at the clock here, so we'll just take two minutes, and then we'll talk about that. All right. How are we doing? I think I'm doing fine. Would you be willing to share, I mean, there are those things like, I've been called to do this, I've been called to do that. Would you share some of the other things that the Lord has asked of you?

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, so the things that came to mind, and I'm sure if I tried this in an hour, I'd get other answers, but this is what came, is to be a voice in the world that advocates for his church. And another thought is to minister among leaders. That's definitely what I'm trying to do through Leading Saints. And be a father my children will remember, you know, keeping that my role as a father clear and make sure there's good focus and intention in that role. So that's what came to mind over those two minutes.

Brent Holladay:

And I'm really glad you mentioned about, to me, as I thought about this for you, your calling to do what you do here with Leading Saints has touched my life.

Kurt Francom:

Oh, thank you.

Brent Holladay:

I've been a listener for many years. Awesome. Almost since the beginning of the podcast. Wow. And if you were to ask me what's your favorite episode, I think I would say the last one I just listened to. Because every episode I've come away with, oh, I need to focus on that, and I need to focus on that.

Kurt Francom:

Wow.

Brent Holladay:

And in my own life, I had something different. I went on a completely different career path than I thought. Oh, wow. And I didn't earn the money that I thought I might earn otherwise. Went through some other difficulties along the way. But it put me where I could do what the Lord

wanted me to do. And I can see that in your life. You've let the Lord put you where he needs you.

Kurt Francom:

Well, thank you. That means a lot.

Brent Holladay:

And I wish you the best, especially with the children. That's where it gets really hard.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, the leading scenes thing is easy compared to being the dad where I struggle at times.

Brent Holladay:

That's right. I once heard somebody say, you know what raising children does?

Kurt Francom:

What's that?

Brent Holladay:

It raises parents.

Kurt Francom:

That's so true.

Brent Holladay:

Yeah. The children are kind of on their own. They'll have to figure it out themselves because we'll make enough errors along the way. But it really does help us to become the people that we need to become. But I think the key is we hear of those who criticize the church about tithing and those things. I don't think they understand. And again, I can say this in my opinion. I think they're missing the whole point of what the law of consecration is. They're not anywhere close to the idea of anything of which the Lord would ask you, of which tithing is just so small. And there are also those who think the Law of Consecration, well, that's the United Order. No, no, the United Order was – the Law of Consecration is this universe of things. The United Order was one little domain in that, and there are other things tithing to domain in that. And there are many other parts of this. But the key here is, as you look at those who are willing to do anything, I have a good friend. She's had a difficult, difficult, difficult life, but she has been centered in the temple. And I'm talking to her the other day, and she was mentioning how the bishop caught her on the fact that every time she answers his phone call, she says, Bishop, what would you like me to do? Now, what if every elders quorum president, that any time you called them, or a council and the bishop calls them, or the bishop calls them, what if everybody in the church answered with, Bishop, President, what would you like me to do? How would your life be? Yeah, awesome. So we know the principle, we can ask, we don't think we're quite there, we can ask Heavenly Father, He will inspire us with those things that we need to do to more fully live the law of consecration. And the deeper that we go into that, and we see those tender mercies and the things the Lord has asked for us, the deeper we go into that, the more we'll feel the love of our Heavenly Father in our lives.

Kurt Francom:

That's powerful. Love it. I'm so glad we did that. That's really, really helpful. Great exercise. All right, I guess this leads us to our final one, not about what you can't do, but what you can do.

Brent Holladay:

One of the things I really learned is that there's a lot, it's very easy to say, I can't do that. Again, I need to tell a couple of experiences at the temple. One day, okay, and on Saturday, we had people that traveled, our temple district, some of the, even workers lived over six hours from the temple. So we were not open on Saturday evenings. We closed at 4.30, we were shut down. So one day, and we had some missionaries that came with a recent convert, they showed up about 4.25, okay? Because the Baptistry people lived about two to three hours away and had something going on that evening, they had already basically closed down the Baptistry and had left. At 4.30, I had planned to leave because I had a stake conference that I was supposed to speak at that evening, and the activity started at a time that would best mean I should leave at 4.30. This is 4.25. It would be easy to say, I can't do anything. But instead, I sat there and said, what can we do? My first decision was, it's not that important that I be there for anything preliminary as long as I make it to the meeting, that stake conference meeting to speak, and

that's all they need me for. So therefore, we took the missionaries and that brother downstairs. I did determine that we would not be able to reopen up the whole thing with clothing and cleaning up and checking out clothing and all that, because all those people weren't there anymore. But I did determine we could do confirmations. So we took this new member and the two missionaries downstairs. We sat in front of the baptismal font, and we talked about the work for the dead. And then after we did that for about 10 minutes, maybe a little bit more than that, we got some names. The recorder that was there, actually an assistant recorder, had to reopen up the day because it already closed out the day. He had to reopen up the day. But he did that so that we could do some confirmations. And I think one of the missionaries, it might have been the first time he had actually done confirmations in the temple. So it was a wonderful experience for them, and it gave them a spirit. And I was sharing that story later on with some missionaries from the mission. They said, oh, we know that person. You know how special he felt that experience was that you took the time to do that and give him that experience when they had got there and they heard of the temples closing and all. They had no idea if anything would happen, but we did something. Here's a similar one. It was on a day that we had a hurricane coming in the next day. So we decided we're closing down operations at noon. In Utah, it would be a big snowstorm coming. So that people have time to travel home from work before the weather starts. When do you close the temple? For us, it was at noon. Well, at about, I don't know, 10, 15, 20 minutes before noon, it was probably 10 or 15 minutes before noon, these three women who had come down to see a launch over at Kennedy Space Center, which was canceled because of the hurricane, had just come to walk on the temple grounds. And they just stepped into the foyer of the temple. And I was in the area just checking to see if everything was closing down. And me and a couple of the other people started talking to him. Now, again, they hadn't planned to come to the temple. They were in jeans and all of that. But we have people in jeans come every day to the Orlando temple. And we teach our workers, what do you do? Welcome to the temple. That's right. We welcome them in. And we got talking that, oh, it would be nice. We didn't really plan that we were going to the temple or anything. Oh, it would have been nice to have done something. And I said, would you like to go to the celestial room? Oh, yes, we'd love to do that. Well, to do that, we need to do some ordinances. And so we had, and one of them didn't even have her temple, at least one of them didn't have her temple recommend, so we looked her up, got them in the temple, got them all white dresses, got some names for the baptistry, went down, and each of them did a list of confirmations. So they completed an ordinance, and then we let them go to the celestial room. So that something that just kind of like had happened in their lives had some meaning, a meaningful experience that could go with that. And I think often, It's so easy to just say, Oh, I'm sorry, we're closed. You know, time has passed, those people have gone home. And I think we all have those things. But as we think about it, I think we'll recognize places where we said, What can I do in this situation? And in their lives, I'm sure it was a significant experience. And that's what we want to do. What can we do to make a great patron experience?

Kurt Francom:



Yeah. Wow, that's awesome. That's awesome. Any other point, principal story that we missed There?

Brent Holladay:

I don't think so. I will say one observation. And we all kind of do this. I think of Elder Kearon's, quote, relentless pursuit. My testimony is that in the temple, there are those on the other side of the veil, that are in relentless pursuit to move this work forward. And we just need to open our hearts so that it will go forward.

Kurt Francom:

That's awesome. I sure appreciate this discussion and the principles and the stories, and it makes me excited to go to the temple again. The last question I have for you, as you know, listening to so many episodes of Leading Saints, is you reflect on your time as a temple president. How has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Brent Holladay:

This goes back to the first point, the charity, the love. the people who need to learn to comprehend the Savior and our Father in Heaven through us. I have been motivated so that I can do that with people, so that I can hopefully portray that love to them. I have been motivated to be a better person. I have been motivated to think before something happens. How do I need to approach this so that I can be that representative of the Savior that I need to be so that they can feel his love in their life? And when I make mistakes, which I do every day, I mean, I can talk about all the dumb things I've done. This interview wasn't about that. But as I make mistakes and those times that I say, no, I didn't do a good enough job, I contemplate, how would the Savior have responded, so that if I ever am put in a similar situation again, I will become more like Him. And I think in that, that's where I have become that better disciple of Jesus Christ. As I think about things, I have my own kind of thing here with the song, I Am a Child of God. that was, teach me all that—remember, it was originally, teach me all that I must know, and then the prophet said, change it to teach me all that I must do. To me, in today's environment, I think of that as, teach me all that I must be to live with Him someday. My experiences have hopefully helped me to become more like the Savior. And I share that with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kurt Francom:

And that concludes this How I Lead interview. I hope you enjoyed it. And 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 experience. And this is how we develop as leaders, just hearing what the other guy is doing, trying some things out, testing, adjusting for your area. And that's where great leadership is discovered. 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. and see if we can line them up. So again, go to [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) slash 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. Remember, go to [leadingsaints.org](http://leadingsaints.org) slash 14 to access the remarkable presentation by Anthony Sweatt about ambiguity and doctrine.

Elder 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.