

Topics to Consider

April 7, 2024

Geneva, New York

Denver and Stephanie Snuffer

Stephanie Snuffer: Okay, alright. 1-2-3, eyes on me! Works for second graders; sometimes works for fifth graders. Doesn't work so good for adults.

Denver Snuffer: She's a substitute teacher at Waterford. So, yeah, you're gonna...

SS: Alright. Okay. Are you gonna sit? What are you gonna do? We're supposed to be up here together.

DS: I'm gonna make faces.

SS: Okay, so we—I don't know, about two weeks ago, maybe?—we started talking about maybe some topics that, if he finished, that we could bring up and just briefly address or put some ideas out there for you that you can start to consider in terms of, you know, yourselves/your relationships. If anybody has ever heard me speak in the last year or so, I have a particular penchant for interpersonal relationships and the benefit of getting your crap together, which basically means you have to know stuff. And I love how much knowledge we can gain by reading Scriptures, books, whatever it is we're doing. And I don't want to leave this part of learning off of the table. So Denver's sort of really been a wonderful guinea pig for the last few years for me. We... He's willing to... He's taught me amazing things over the past 30 years that we've been married, and I've been, hopefully, lucky to offer up some stuff that maybe he hasn't known in the past.

DS: It's the electric shocks that bother me most. [laughter]

SS: Oh, stop it. Alright. (Kids, that doesn't really happen.) Okay, we have... We came up with like nine or ten; we're gonna maybe try and get through one or two—okay?—depending on how long it takes. The first idea we want to talk about is an idea... The idea of resilience. And every time I say, "resilience," I want to sing Chumbawamba. Anybody?

Edwin Wilde: "I get knocked down..."

DS: "...but I get up again!"

SS: Right? Yeah. Okay. If you didn't hear Edwin sing Chumbawamba, just ask him a little bit later. Resilience has a very specific definition: It is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. So inherent in that definition is, "Life is hard, and you are going to get knocked down." And then you have to get up again. And what I did is I tried to find scriptural representation of resilience, so...because there's nothing better than sort of marrying the two ideas, right?—some, you know, personal skills, some mental wellness, some self awareness—and then just see how that is represented scripturally.

So, in James 1:2-4, there's this scripture that says, *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing* (Epistle of

Jacob 1:2 RE). So, we were driving to Niagara yesterday and reading through these things, and I said... Okay, so then we're talking about the scripture, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." And I asked, "What do you think that means?" And you gave your input...

DS: Feel free to repeat it.

SS: I don't remember what it was because I was actually looking for the...

DS: It was profound.

SS: I was looking for the RIGHT answer. And he didn't give me the right answer, so I had to wait 'til he finished, and then I had to say, "But what about THIS?" And so, what struck me was it says...

DS: [Chuckling] That's true.

SS: ... "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." So this idea of the trying of your faith, this idea of a difficulty or a fall down, if you will, and tying it with *patience* and *perfect work* and *entire* and *wanting nothing* just really sort of actually blew my mind. Because I think that what this scripture is trying to say is that we have the ability to be complete, we have the ability to be whole, we have the opportunity to want nothing in the patience...

DS: (I just want to see if this [mic] makes feedback.)

SS: ...of the trying of our faith. And so, if you tie this to resilience, the "getting knocked down" is a gift. It is the opportunity for you to do what the Lord wants you to do. Have faith. Pick yourself back up. Be resilient. And in that, you have the opportunity to be perfect, be whole.

DS: You know... Is this [the mic] working?

SS: Up... Very... All the way up to your mouth.

DS: Alllll the way up...

SS: All the way up to your mouth.

DS: So like...

SS: Come over here!

DS: ...like Jagger.

SS: Yeah, you're gonna hate this. Get over here.

DS: I get to speak like Jagger.

SS: Yeah.

DS: I've suggested that you read the account in Exodus and only look at what Moses said in the story of the deliverance from the pharaoh. Moses was told to go, do, and say some things. But it's pretty clear that when he went and he did and he said, that the whole process intimidated him, and he wasn't even confident about how well it would be vindicated—and **Pharaoh wasn't persuaded**. So he went, and he told the pharaoh that the sign would be given, and that sign was given. And however much Cecil B. DeMille may have distorted our view of what that looked like, to the pharaoh, it didn't look like enough to justify freeing the people. And Moses left there defeated and complaining and whining about it. If you think that adversity is something that only YOU get to experience...

It's universal. It's everywhere. And it includes extraordinary frustration, difficulty, setbacks (that we know about) in the life of Moses, in the life of Jesus Christ, in the life of Joseph Smith. We just don't have an adequate record to be able to fully assess all of the challenges, difficulties, and disappointments in the life of Melchizedek. I mean, why DID he need, by faith, to call rivers out of their course? What exactly was going on when that event took place? I mean, was he begging God and running for his life? It reads like "triumph," but I don't know of any life that gets lived without setback after setback and frustration after frustration. I referred to the first verse in the Book of Mormon (in the LDS version), Nephi telling you about himself—suffered all kinds of things throughout his life and, nevertheless, been "highly favored to the Lord"—is because he was resilient.

SS: Um-hmm.

DS: (Here, I'll take that.)

SS: Okie dokie. Job is another obvious representation of someone who was incredibly resilient: *Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him* (Job 5:10 RE). "Though he slay me..." This is Job talking about God: "Though he slay me, I will trust in Him." That's a pretty powerful recognition of where these bumps and knock-downs are coming from, right? Job knew what was happening to him, and yet, he views it as an opportunity to trust in God.

It doesn't take... You don't have to read very much or listen to too many different things to realize that we're not a particularly resilient population. We're actually quite soft, and it's getting worse by the HOUR, actually. It really is getting worse by the hour. And so, resilience is an important thing to understand, and it's an important thing to cultivate. And there are actually things you can do to increase your resilience. Many of the things that are talked about in the context of mental health or mental wellness are SKILLS. This is not the kind of stuff that distills on you like the dew—umm, I don't know—the dew, right? This is stuff you have to practice. Very often it doesn't come naturally. Very often we feel confused/unmoored, so to speak. We don't know where we're going wrong.

I won't name any names, but I was talking to a lovely woman who told me that she listens to my podcast and realized that she was doing something that she thought was right until I said otherwise. (I wasn't telling her she was doing it wrong.) But there are skills that can help in these kinds of concepts. And so, resilience is one of them. One of the things that you can do to increase your resilience is a gratitude practice. And a gratitude practice can be on paper, it can be in a journal, it can be with a buddy, it can be through text messages and

group family chats, it can be some form of prayer, it can be said out loud, it can be said quietly. But a resilient person is grateful! They're grateful for their shoes and their most comfortable pair of pants. And they're grateful that the Airbnb had another set of pillows in the other bedroom because the ones in the bed that she was sleeping in were not sleepable (or something like that). And a gratitude practice is a wonderful way to increase your resilience. And it's easy. It's free. You don't have to ask anyone or pay anyone for this, right? You can do this on your own.

DS: I'm telling you, you would have paid money to use those pillows in a high school pillow fight [laughter]. You could dislocate some important body parts with 'em. So there's reason to be grateful for just about everything. The idea that you don't mourn your losses or deal with your frustrations and that the failure to do that is an absence of resilience...

It shows up over and over when Nephi is lamenting his life and when Alma is lamenting his sojourn. They both interrupt their complaints and say, "But I really ought to be grateful," and then they flip it. I mean, it's not just an idle idea that you can overcome your disappointment and frustration with gratitude. It's in the Scriptures by some pretty accomplished Scripture authors that they felt the same way we all feel from time to time. But then they stop and take an inventory.

There's a fairly... Well, you would know some of these guys who are now not only NOT Latter-day Saints, they actively engage in the business of being an ex-Mormon and do shows and collect money and... In private conversations, I have had people who appear for all the world to be faithless and hostile to the Restoration and disbelieving in Joseph say their lives were better when they believed, and they would trade nothing for the mission that they served when they went out preaching for two years. They were blessed, and they were benefited from that. However much they may have lost their faith now, it blessed and it benefited them. I can't help but think that in declining years, as people get a little more reflective and a little more sober about eternity, that there won't be a whole lot of people that we regard right now as faithless and hostile and apostate who, as they think back on their life, will realize their happiest moments came when they were trying to obey God, came when they were serving faithfully within a church organization or within a community of believers. And I think many of them may yet repent, as long as the disease that kills them lingers long enough. You take 'em in a heart attack, it may be too abrupt. But if you can give 'em something that they will suffer to die with, I think many of them are going to regroup and reconsider and repent. I think it's coming. Well, adversity serves not only a benign—but it serves a beneficial—purpose, and gratitude gets you there quicker. Yeah.

SS: We have... We would have nothing in terms of this particular religion (or Scriptures, for that matter) if the people who were not writing them or sacrificing or moving or crossing the ocean or...were not resilient people. That goes without saying, except that it is not a HIGHLIGHTED feature in what we read or what we take in; it's just this backdrop, and we don't realize how much of "what mental health is" existed in these people: Abinadi, Nephi, Lehi, Abraham, Isaac. I mean, I'm just gonna... I'm just... Pick out the names! It doesn't matter...

DS: Lehi's wife.

SS: Yeah, Lehi's wife.

DS: Yeah.

SS: It doesn't matter...

DS: She complained.

SS: She has a name. What is her name, honey?

DS: Sariah.

SS: Sariah. Thank you. Yes. I am not Denver's wife. I am Stephanie.

DS: [Chuckling] Yeah, there ya go. Yeah.

SS: So in the context of these ideas and these concepts, understand that there is a lot not written that we just take for granted or ignore outright as characteristics: a solid set of mental health skills that these people operated with. And we're running around here, willy nilly, you know, lo there, lo here, dismissing that, only taking this seriously because we don't know what we don't know.

So another way to increase your resilience is to meditate. Ahhhh. Have a mindfulness practice. A mindfulness practice will improve your ability to bounce back from difficult situations. And it's not going to be magic; you're not automatically going to wake up one morning and say, "Oh, yes, I'm so glad that I did that five minutes of mindfulness yesterday because, now, the fact that my dryer doesn't work and my fence blew down doesn't bother me in the slightest!" Okay? Might still bother you, but you will have a better capacity to tolerate that, right?

DS: Yeah. Because you can always use that same wind that blew the fence down to dry the clothes! It's like that Monty Python thing: "Always Look on the bright side of life!"

(I'm sorry. You were talking about something...)

SS: No, you're absolutely right. You're absolutely right. I love... That is resilience. Resilience is the ability to find the positive in something.

DS: [Chuckling] I hear whistling. [Whistles]

SS: The ability to look on the bright side of life is also a resilient skill, right? Use your friends, use your family. If you're low, if you're down, if you're struggling, reach out to someone who can help somehow build you up and give you something, you know, that sort of settles you down.

I have done... I... In fact, I looked while I was sitting over there: Podcast, 37, 38, and 39 are all on resilience. And the reason I did three podcasts on resilience is because I think it is pretty dang important. And we don't have a lot of it. And I think it's one of those things that,

as a body of people whose goal is to come together in some meaningful way to further God's work (in whatever way you're called, in whatever way that will look like for you, at whatever time in your life you are at), this is something you have to have—because I assure you, you will get knocked down about a million and a half times. And if you don't have what it takes already to get back up, in the immortal words of Chumbawamba, you know, there's a whole community of people who got no use for you.

DS: Hey, I wanna comment on the...that idea of meditation. I think one of the most interesting passages in one of the shortest books in the Book of Mormon is when Enos goes out in the wilderness to hunt beasts, and the words that he often heard his father speak to him sank deep into his heart. Well, what that means is that he may be out there and he may be alone and he may be up to something else, but the word sank deep in his heart. He's meditative about something that matters to him.

Back when there was a Provo temple (it's been destroyed recently), you could go to the Provo temple, and every 20 minutes there was a session starting because they had six rooms in a circle. And as a law student and then after graduation, I went to the Provo temple so often (in the pre-1990 era) that I could recite the endowment ('cuz you'd heard it so many times). Well, once they started making dramatic revisions in 1990 (and have continued on apace), there are many, many things that were once there that are still in my memory that I DO reflect on, that I DO meditate on—because I think the whole purpose of it was to present, in a ceremonial form, vast ideas compressed into little, little symbols, so that if you could grasp the little symbol, it would spool out into something much, much bigger.

(I don't know; I may have already told this story.) But I was there in the temple one time with a group of missionaries, 'cuz missionaries came over and ate at our place all the time, and one of the permitted things you could do with them was to go to the temple. And so I was in the temple with a group of—I think it was a whole district—and we were in the celestial room, and I was talking to them about some of the symbolism that's embedded into the garments and how they relate to some of the things that go on in the ceremony. And there was this old, puckered fellow that looked rather more like a Baptist Sunday School teacher than a Latter-day Saint, and...

SS: Don't editorialize.

DS: Don't editorialize?

SS: [Chuckling] No.

DS: It makes the story better. [Audience laughter.]

And he scowled for a bit at me, and then he came over, and... Literally, I'm gonna try and replicate (as best I can) his whisper: "If you're talking about the meaning..."

SS: Stop it. That is not...

DS: "...of the symbols, you're wrong!..."

SS: I was there.

DS: “We don’t know what they mean!”

SS: [Chuckling] That’s not how it happened.

DS: I thanked him, and then I continued apace explaining what was going on. And it, really, it drew him in. He actually got interested.

SS: [Chuckling] That is not how it happened!

DS: Anyway, that’s a long way to go from Enos in the wilderness hunting beasts to...

SS: What are you talking about?

DS: But meditating on things, particularly some of the prosaic words that we get in Scripture... Some of the passages that we’ve got in Isaiah are an amalgamation of things that will happen/have happened/are happening or patterns that are going to repeat themselves in history by multiple people, at multiple times, in multiple ways. And when Christ finally gets to the point in Third Nephi that he has now delivered, “I’ve now told you what the Father commanded me to tell you,” and there’s a line of demarcation; He’s been doing and saying and teaching and accomplishing exactly what the Father wanted him to do, and when He gets done with that, then He just sort of freelances for a little bit. And Christ in Third Nephi is rather like Isaiah: He’s future, He’s present, He’s past, He’s future, He’s present. It’s as if there is no past, present, or future in the mind of the Lord or in the revelations given by the Lord, but that they amalgamate all into one—so that the past and the present and the future are present before God continually. And when He comments, He comments (basically) thematically. And so, when you get a thematic commentary by Isaiah or by Christ, maybe that’s because we ought to be meditating about themes, about really big subjects, about really repeating patterns that come and get fulfilled—extraordinarily, clearly—in one life at one time and then get repeated in your own experience, and in the experience of your children, and in the experience of a body of believers, over and over again. Because when God interjects Himself into the course of events that we live, it turns out that everything mirrors what went on before and what will come after. And as you meditate on those things, sometimes you can see the very themes that were present in the book of Isaiah or in the comments of Christ are present in your life and that you’re living a pattern—and the pattern is continual.

That meditation thing? That’s big, whammy stuff there.

SS: Okay, and actually, what you said reminded me about the themes and the themes of life, because I know you’re talking Scripture, and then you went personal and then community, but that’s also a really important thing. Because there are themes in your life. There are patterns in your life. Your patterns are different than mine. Mine are different than his. And that self-awareness and that meditation and that opportunity to focus on the patterns in your life and the themes in your life (this is from that book we’re listening to)...

DS: Oh, yeah.

SS: ...is an important way of bringing self-awareness and bringing an awareness to see where your strengths are.

- Where do you get stuck?
- Where are you blocked?
- What works for you?
- What doesn't?
- What relationships are difficult for you?
- Why?
- Are you quick to anger?
- Are you slow to calm?

These are themes and patterns that if you start to pay attention—through a meditative practice, by seeing where you're resilient and where you are not resilient—this will become obvious to you. And you will awaken to a new level of understanding, which **by its very nature** draws you closer to God. The work and glory of God *is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man* (Genesis 1:7 RE). And we have the scripture side down: we have the "study the Scriptures," we have the tools to study the Scriptures, we have a lot of really good resources and a lot of really good material to do all of that. That's one part. That's one part. It's a huge part. The other part is this part: it's the YOU part. It's the part you are trying to find those deeper answers to so that you can see why you're stuck. You can see why you can't break through in this way or that way—and resilience and mindfulness and journaling and gratitude. Those are real skills and real tools that have the potential to really open up in ways that you could not have foreseen before.

Okay, do you have anything else on resilience, 'cuz I think I'll move on.

DS: What was it...? What was it that...?

SS: (Give that to Q; she wants it.)

DS: (She wants this?)

SS: [Chuckling] (Just give it!)

DS: What was it that Ferris Bueller said to the guy at the restaurant when they ordered pancreas? It's because of...

SS: Oh, gosh!

DS: It's because of...

SS: People like...

Audience Member: Tolerance.

DS: Tolerance that...

SS: Yeah.

DS: People like us can put up with people like you.

SS: What does that have to do with anything? I like it, but...

DS: Resilience!

SS: What does it have to do with anything?

DS: That's just the way I "resiliate"!

SS: Okay, now this one, okay, this one is "wise mind."

DS: Oh, this is important.

SS: This is important, but...

DS: We should have started there.

SS: No. Okay, whatever.

DS: Okay. Yeah.

SS: The problem with this is I have a whole bunch of scriptures written down, but there's two things wrong: 1) They're King James Version Bible scriptures in Proverbs, and neither one of us brought our scriptures, and 2) I can't translate them into the new Proverbs. So I don't know what they say. I just went through and found them. But let's start with "wise mind," okay? "Wise mind" is this concept that is the balance between rational thought and your emotional experience. That's important. "Wise mind" is the balance between your rational thought and your emotional experience.

Now I want you just for a minute to close your eyes, and just briefly, remember the last emotional experience you may have had.

DS: Like, really emotional? Like...?

SS: (Shush, don't leave 'em.)

Could have been...it could have been a calm emotional experience.

DS: Hmm... No, no.

SS: It could have been a very agitated emotional, right?

DS: Ah, yeah. There we are. Yeah.

SS: There is a very distinct difference between your rational thought and your emotional experiences—like HUGE, like to the point of, "Oh gosh, I wish I hadn't have acted like that," right? "Oh, shoot, I wish I hadn'ta said that," okay? So there's this idea of balancing this all out in a wise mind. Practice: meaning skill, meaning this is something you can actually get better at! This is what I love about this stuff. Not one of us is stuck where we are. It doesn't

matter how old you are, it doesn't matter how young you are, if you are willing to learn some things, practice some skills, you can improve.

So "reasonable mind": this is where your logic is, it's where your facts are, it's where you see things objectively. This is where you just describe something. ~~Decisions are made from this state~~ The decisions that are made from this state are typically analytical and based in evidence.

DS: Oh, yeah. We talked about this yesterday.

SS: Well, kind of, but... So don't go there yet.

DS: Okay. Alright.

SS: But this is "the lawyer." This is "the facts." This is "how it is." It is "this way," and if it's not this way...

DS: "Just the facts, ma'am."

SS: ... (right), it can't be any other way.

DS: 'til Friday.

SS: Right? Okay. "Emotion mind" is where your emotions drive this state: Decisions are made based on feelings, and responses are governed by the emotional reaction to a situation.

DS: [With great exasperation] "Are you kidding me?!!"

SS: You have very little control over your emotions.

DS: Yeah.

SS: They just come unbidden. What you do have is the ability to control the **management** of your emotions, right? So there is no... Not one of you out there should be saying to yourself, "Well, I have a hard time controlling my emotions," because you're not supposed to control your emotions. You're not supposed to control whether they come, whether they go away, what they are, how they are. You're not supposed to care whether it surprises you or it doesn't surprise you. What you're supposed to care about is how you ACT. That's what you're supposed to care about. You're only supposed to care about how you act—because that's what other people are gonna care about.

So we had a discussion (I don't know if this was about this one), but we were talking about how the person...

Okay, I come in, and I'm crying. (I'm trying to think of a good reason why I would be crying. Whatever. It's okay.)

DS: Red Sox lost.

SS: That's not why I'm crying [audience laughter]. So I come in, and I'm upset about something. All right, maybe I'm crying, maybe I'm not crying; maybe I'm just plain old upset, who knows? And I'm upset, and I come in, and I'm ranting and raving, and I'm upset, and we're in the kitchen—right?—and everybody can see me. My kids can see me. Whoever's there can see me. They can clearly see that mom's upset. And dad steps in, and he's like, "Hey, it's no big deal. You don't need to be upset." And he tries to calm me down. In that—my emotional experience, okay?—in that moment, who is looked at as the better person?

[Audience response.]

The rational one! That is nonsense! Okay, so HE gets... I mean, not in MY family, because we're all like me. I mean, we're... This is the... I mean, there's three therapists and whatever. So that's not praised in my house, right? But in the world, the person who looks good to the world is the rational one, the one who calms the emotional child down, the one who says, "There, there. You don't have to cry," right? That is a profoundly misunderstood concept.

DS: You've reversed it.

SS: Yeah, the person who actually is in some sort of healthy engagement in their life experience is the one who is actually emotional...

DS: They're dealing with it.

SS: ... (right?), the one who's actually feeling the frustration or the tears or the crying or the sadness or the whatever it is. In that moment, what I have control over and what I should do is make sure that my BEHAVIOR in my emotional state does not hurt anyone, is not offensive, is not lashing out, is not threatening or in any way aggressive, right?

But the wise mind and the rational mind are both important. They have a place. The wise mind is the convergence of "reasonable" and "emotional" mind, leading to intuition and knowledge, where you can make balanced decisions. My favorite part of this is that the balance between those two things leads to intuition—right?—this sense, this felt sense, that what you're doing is right because you are neither too emotional or too rational.

DS: Yeah. Have you ever thought about how Christ could tell what the other people were thinking? They haven't articulated it yet. It was intuitive. And I don't think that that was because of a magic trick. I think it was because of the wise mind. He could look at their demeanor, He could look at their body language, He could look at their facial expression, He could tell from that—and because of the circumstance, and the situation, the setting, and the subject at hand—He could tell they were about to oppose Him on this topic. So He could say, "Yeah, I know what you're thinking," and then address that without them ever having said a word. He was intuitive because it was the wise mind.

SS: Okay, so then I wrote a whole bunch of Proverbs scriptures on the back of my paper, but I can't do anything with them. So... Okay, so what I want YOU to do with them is I want you to read Proverbs.

DS: Hmm. Yeah.

SS: And I want you to read Proverbs with this idea in mind. Where is there some sort of representation of the wise mind in the Proverbs? Because we all know that Proverbs is full of, you know, comments and discussions about wisdom. So find the scriptures in Proverbs that deal with the wise mind. And then go further than that. Just continue to look for these concepts in your Scriptures, because you will find them. They are there. This is the material in mental health concepts, whether it's a therapy, in and of itself, or... I can't even think of what I'm...the words I'm looking for. It is the gospel in secular language. That's all mental health is. It is a way for a non-believing population to still have the opportunity to develop a spiritual, grounded side.

DS: Let's go there next, and we'll finish there.

SS: Okay.

DS: Yeah.

SS: Alright. Okay, so nothing more on wise mind?

DS: It eludes me!

SS: Okay. (I'm sorry. I just put a mint in my mouth.) Alright, so the next one is: We're gonna talk about assumptions. And I have to... We keep having these conversations. I cannot... (I don't know what this is.) I refuse to talk or have a conversation or listen to a conversation if the premise of the conversation starts on an assumption. If the premise of the conversation starts on an assumption—meaning you just think you know something, and so you're going to start to have a conversation—I will literally stop you. Because I cannot do that. It is such an enormous waste of time to talk about something that is not grounded in any kind of fact or truth whatsoever. And when you start to pay attention to it, you will stop talking to a lot of people! And the rest of us should just shut our mouths because we're not actually saying anything. We're just walking around, opening our mouths, saying, "Hey, did you hear this?" And I'll say, "Where did you hear that?" And they'll say, "Oh, so and so said, 'So and so,'" and I'm like, "Stop there, okay?" Not a conversation I'm willing to have, because there's nothing to it. And so, this idea of assumptions and operating from a place of assumptions is incredibly toxic to interpersonal relationships. Even, I mean...

And it's amazing how assumptive we actually are, right? So it is as simple as: He comes home from work, you know, kind of cranky or... I don't know, maybe he comes home from work, and I'm cranky; let's do it that way. He comes home from work, and I'm cranky (had a tired day; I'm hungry; I didn't have plans for dinner), and I snap at him because—I don't know why—because I'm cranky! And he just, for some reason (maybe he's not feeling particularly resilient that day), and he just sort of goes into a spin, and he thinks that I am mad at him. And then he starts to think of a conversation we had this morning that maybe didn't go perfectly. And he's like, "Oh my gosh, that's why she's mad at me." And then we spend three hours just kind of poking at each other unnecessarily because he assumed—because I was cranky—that I was mad at him. How is that fixed? Well, it's generally not, right? We go to bed, and then we wake up in the morning, and everybody's

fine. But we actually wasted three hours of some amount of emotional dysregulation and disconnection because of a 30-second exchange when he walked in the door. [Addressing Denver] What could you have done?

DS: I could have stopped at McDonald's and...

No, umm, the... There's a statement that kind of stuck with me. Carl Jung, the psychologist, this is a quote from 1937. It said, "In the absence of facts, we project what happened," meaning: When we don't know the truth about something, then we draw on ourselves and we project the things that we fear (or we are) into assumptions about the other person. So when you don't have facts BUT you are viewing someone narrowly and critically, what you're probably doing is you're revealing something TO yourself ABOUT yourself, not about them. I thought it was a profound insight, because we really do let our fears inform what we think of others, and often our fears are based upon what our own internal problems are.

This was the one where we talked about the law.

SS: Yes. Yeah. Okay, hold on just a second. I want to brief... And then we'll probably end with that.

So assumptions erode trust. I'm just going to tell you what happens when you operate from a place of assuming something. I mean, besides the fact that it makes an ass out of you and me, right? Do you remember when your teacher used to write that on the board or whatever? ASS-U-ME, which is really ironic because that is the very... That's the bedrock of what assumptions are. Assumptions erode trust. They break down healthy communication—assuming you have healthy communication. Assumptions break down healthy communication. They build and breed resentment and conflict. They are barriers to intimacy and personal growth. There is a loss of self expression and agency, especially if someone is making assumptions about YOU. If I assume that my child is intentionally misbehaving and that is the way I deal with that child, then that child has lost the opportunity to express him or herself and be autonomous in sharing with me what is actually going on for them. So I want you to pay attention, because **you will be SHOCKED** at how much of your life is built on assumptions and conversations that take place around them.

So this was where we talked about it because...

DS: Yeah.

SS: So let's... Yeah, let's talk about it. We were talking about how assumptions play into our lives but particularly him—because his life is literally built on facts, right? I mean, 30 years in the law practice, it's facts and only facts! So what were we talking about?

DS: You cannot—under the rules of evidence, both state and federal—you can't offer opinion testimony except within extremely narrow confines that require you to have some kind of basis for offering the opinion, and it has to be qualified, based upon knowledge, experience, education, training. Other than that, you can't offer an opinion. So a witness says, "Well, he was at fault in causing the car accident." That's an opinion. That's a

conclusion. Why are you saying that? If that was the testimony, there would be an objection, the objection would be sustained, and if the witness managed to say that before the objection, the judge would say, “Strike it from the record.”

- What did he do?
- Where was he at?
- What time was it?
- Where were you located?
- What opportunity did you have to observe?
- Describe what it was, then, that you saw.

All of those things are foundational before you ever get to a fact. You’re not allowed to just spew things in the courtroom because the courtroom is a fairly serious moment in which you’re trying to resolve a problem. If the problem were easily resolved, you would never have a trial. The only cases that go to trial are the ones where there are two legitimately different stories, and if you believe one story, they will win, and if you believe the other story, they will win. And both sides believe so intensely on the story they’re telling that they can’t resolve it between them—because they simply disagree on what the facts are. So when you finally get there and you’re presenting the case, you don’t get to say, “She’s a bad woman. She was mean. She treated me badly.” Okay, I... Maybe. Yeah, okay. I object. And let’s talk about:

- Who? (Her)
- When?
- Where?
- Was anyone else present at the time?
- Are there other witnesses who saw the same thing you claimed to have beheld?
- Can we get corroborative evidence for this?
- Was it recorded?
- Is there anything other than your word that will allow me to accept the fact that you’re about to offer about what she did that was so troubling?

And at the end of all that, if the final statement—once you’ve laid a foundation so that you know who, what, when, where, and your opportunity to observe, you put out a fact—it is possible that the trier of fact is gonna say, “Yeah, but my wife does that to me every day. She... I wouldn’t call her ‘mean.’ I would call her ‘forthright’ or something a little more laudable.”

We tend not to ever get down to the fact. We tend to “high-level” our descriptions of what went on in characterizations, conclusions, opinions—and completely devoid of facts. And we do that just as a matter of common conversation because it takes a lot of time. Trials take a lot of work. It takes a lot of training for people to finally get to the point that the presentation is focused on the facts that happen.

There have been cases where I knew—I knew!—I could absolutely tear apart the nonsense that the judge was going to hear from the other side, and they offered a bunch of objectionable opinion and conclusions, and I didn’t make any objections. And I’ve got a

judge sitting up there looking at me like, “Did you take the day off, Counselor? What are you doing?” I’ve even had them ask me, “Are you not going to object?” And I’ve had to say on occasion, “No, Your Honor, I don’t have an objection to this line,” but that’s because I have photographs, and I have recordings, and I have documents, and I have other witnesses, and every one of them is consistent, and the nonsense you just heard from the witness, I am going to utterly undermine. And so I want them to do this. Because when you hear the facts and when we finally get to the bottom of it, then you’re going to say, “I can disregard everything that that witness said because it was simply a bunch of negative opinions without any foundation.”

Look, we tend to be far more sloppy, careless, disrespectful, unkind, and frankly, incredible (meaning lacking credibility) in our everyday conversation. I don’t expect you all to become trial lawyers overnight, but it would be nice—particularly if someone has something critical to say about someone else—if you tried to find where the fact was. Because the opinion may be very negative and honestly held, and perhaps, in that person's experience, not only understandable, but maybe that’s the right way they should view the person because of their own life’s experience. But it doesn’t mean that you should share the view unless you make a reasonable enough inquiry to try to get to the bottom of it to figure out what they did. What people do is bad enough. We don’t need to pile on with our opinions.

SS: Yeah, I want to say, too, that this... We practice this wrongly in our relationships, right? This is... We... This is our standard mode of operating (going back just to the basic, you know, example that I used with Denver). And so, it IS a lot of work. It IS a lot of work to build resilience. It IS a lot of work to operate from a wise mind and marry the rational and the emotional together. It IS a lot of work to get to the bottom of what is potentially an assumption. Make no mistake, it IS a LOT of work. It’s not trial-level work but close. And the payoff is much better than trial-level work.

The reason the payoff is better is because everything that you practice in terms of these kinds of skills will improve your relationships, create greater intimacy, build bridges, bring you together. What we’re doing is either keeping us apart or it’s keeping us at the status quo, right? And if our goal is to become, you know, exalted (holy crap), if that’s our goal (our goal is to be exalted), that’s where the work is—right?—because I’m pretty sure we have a set of Heavenly Parents who are still doing this stuff because I don’t think this ever ends, right? As long as you are in a relationship with someone, this is your work. And so when we practice making assumptions (with our kids and with our spouses and with our siblings and with our co-workers), and when we have a imprecision of language and we do not use the correct words for the correct things, and we’re sloppy in our emotional expression, and we’re sloppy in our, you know, we don’t get back up as quickly as we should, that takes a toll on us.

DS: Um-hmm.

SS: It is disconnecting from God when we are not doing this work.

(And that’s four out of the ten... ish.)

DS: Yeah, we’re gonna wrap it up there.

SS: K, I'm done.

DS: So there! Take that!

SS: Alright. Works for me.

DS: (Are those your glasses?)

SS: (No, those are your glasses.)

DS: What? What? [Audience question.] Yeah, SHE'LL answer.

Question 1: Good. It sounds like intuition and assumption are fighting against each other.

SS: Okay, tell me how.

Q1: How is intuition NOT an assumption?

DS: Intuition is based upon the wise mind, which is taking evidence that's before you and reaching a conclusion based upon a premise that you're entertaining from both your own experience, your own emotions, your own background, AND thinking it through.

SS: Assumption... [Mic feedback] (Aaaa, what just happened, Reed?) Assumption is... (Red button. This one? Okay, you hit the red button.)

Assumption is just believing anything you see or hear, without any kind of corroboration. OR assumption is "not actually seeking" for clarification.

DS: Yeah...

SS: So I don't know. I mean, you tell me!

DS: ...the wise mind is marrying both rational thought and emotional reaction. Look, our emotional reactions are exactly the same as the emotional reactions of a little child. When you have a one-year-old, a two-year-old, a three-year-old, a four-year-old and their emotions, their emotions may be closer to the surface and put on display with greater frequency, but an adult's emotions are exactly the same; there's no difference between the two. And the problem is that we tend to express that emotional outburst in more colorful language when we're an adult (and just a lot of noise when you're a child). But it's this... It's grounded in the same thing. So if you're reacting to something emotionally, you're reacting the same way a child would, and it doesn't do any good to tell the child to settle down! You have to let that process play through. And then you can think about, and you can reflect on.

SS: Okay, let's...

DS: The wise mind gives some distance between the emotional outburst and the opportunity to think it through rationally.

SS: Okay...

DS: Assumptions are not based on anything but innuendo—and especially when assumptions are negative (because we tend to allow the assumptions to run in favor of the negative). But we also find people whose assumptions run to the positive. Joseph Smith did that. He thought people generally had the same motivation as did he. As a result, there were a lot of con-men that got over inside the Latter-day Saint community in Kirtland and in Missouri and in Nauvoo. And it was because he trusted people that were untrustworthy. It was an assumption that he made, and it was the wrong one.

SS: K, let's go!

DS: What's that?

SS: I said, "Let's go." It's 4:15.

DS: Oh, yeah, it's 4:15. We're supposed to end now! And you figure it out!