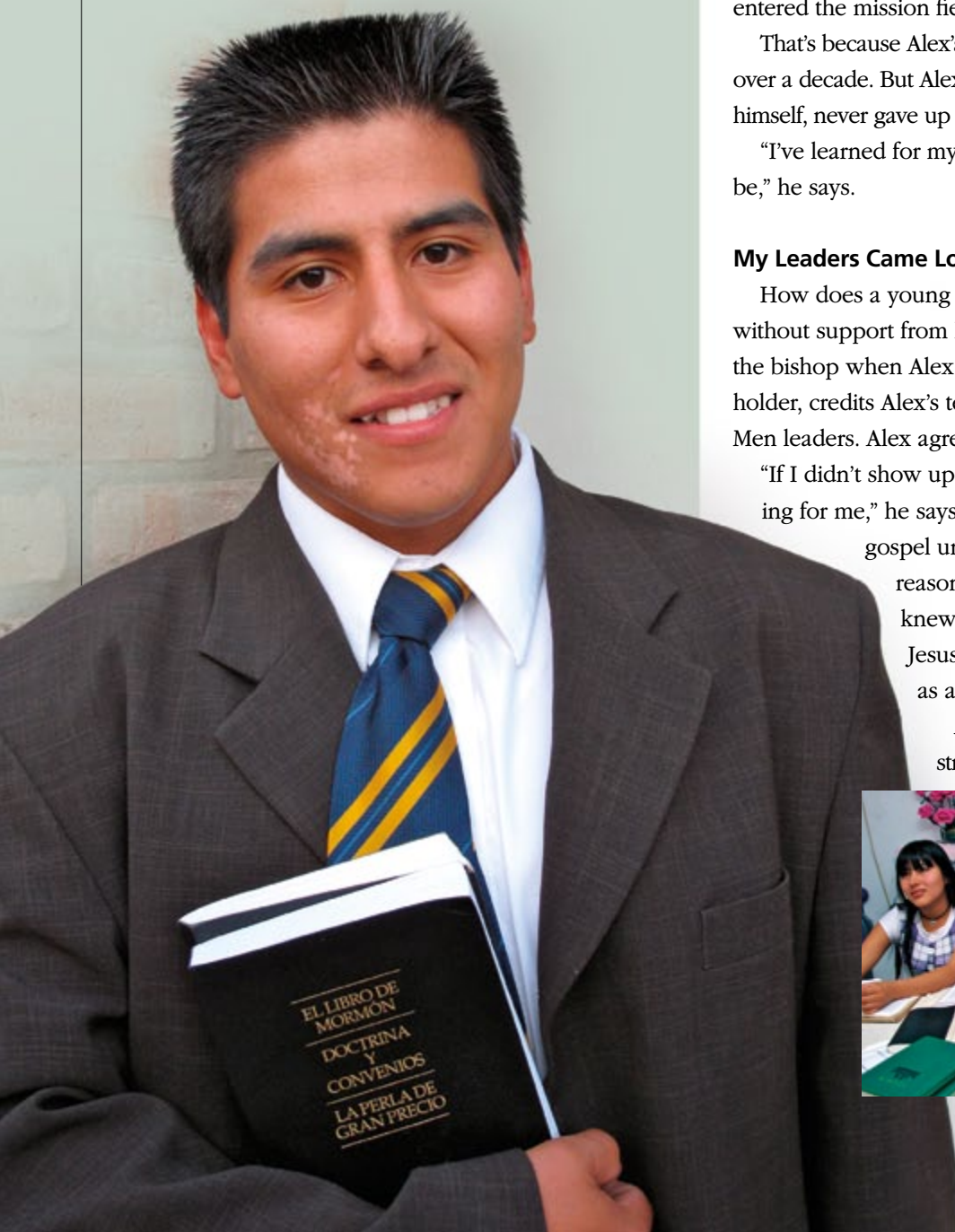


ALEX'S Great

For Alex Escobar, holding up his light has made an eternal difference for his family.



Eight years ago, when Alex Escobar was a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, he committed to serve a full-time mission. At the time, he never could have imagined that his father would be his bishop when he entered the mission field.

That's because Alex's father hadn't been to church for over a decade. But Alex, who was then attending church by himself, never gave up on him—or on the rest of his family.

"I've learned for myself how important example can be," he says.

My Leaders Came Looking for Me

How does a young man stay active in the Church without support from his family? Mario Sayas, who was the bishop when Alex was a young Aaronic Priesthood holder, credits Alex's testimony and his dedicated Young Men leaders. Alex agrees.

"If I didn't show up on Sunday, my leaders came looking for me," he says. "Little by little I learned about the gospel until I had a strong testimony. Another reason I kept going to church is that I knew that only through the gospel of Jesus Christ could we be happy forever as a family."

Achieving that goal meant staying strong even when some of his



Example

church friends in Córdoba, Argentina, wavered.

“There’s a lot of temptation to break the Word of Wisdom and the law of chastity,” says Alex, who drew strength from counsel he received from Bishop Sayas. “He said, ‘The only way to qualify for a worthy wife is to be worthy yourself.’ That has helped me a lot.”

Alex’s testimony was strengthened further following a dream he had in which he was called on a full-time mission. He began preparing but didn’t wait until he was 19 to begin sharing the gospel, starting with his own family.

“Alex always prayed for and encouraged his family,” says Bishop Sayas. “And he would always encourage his older brothers to attend church. The effort to bring his family back succeeded because of Alex.”

“I Was the Hardheaded One”

When Alex’s father, René, thinks back on the 13 years he spent outside the Church, he laments what he missed.

“Those years were very difficult,” he says. “Sometimes I couldn’t help but think about the time I was losing by not enjoying the marvelous life the gospel offers.”

The Escobar family had joined the Church in Córdoba when Alex was a child. They stayed active until moving back to their native country of Bolivia shortly after Alex’s baptism. While in Bolivia, they forgot “what the gospel means to our lives,” René says.

When they returned to Córdoba two years later, Alex’s mother, Carmen, occasionally attended church with the couple’s four children. But René, an avid football player, spent Sundays sleeping off Saturday’s games and associated activities—activities that often meant breaking the Word of Wisdom.

“I was the hardheaded one,” he says. “At times I thought I was completely lost, which we think when we no longer have the companionship of the Spirit.”

What finally turned René around was the realization that his example was hurting his children. “My sons were like orphans who attended church by themselves because their father was not active,” he recalls.

“I began to examine my life and the effect my example was having on my children,” says René, who is grateful that the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ allowed him to repent. “I realized I wasn’t living up to my responsibilities as a father. All these things helped me remember the Lord, get on my knees, and ask Him to help me return.”

As René’s faithfulness and testimony grew, a series of callings followed. Several years after reembracing the gospel, he received an impression that the Lord had prepared him for an important new calling.

“The result is that my father is my bishop,” Alex said.

The Importance of Example

While Alex served in the Argentina Resistencia Mission, everyone missed him, but they were grateful he was sharing his example with others. And they’re grateful for having been sealed in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple in 2009.

“It was Alex who was always working with us and with ward members on our behalf,” Carmen says. “They told us he was always praying for his parents to return to church. We’re grateful he didn’t give up on us.”

Bishop Escobar is happy that Alex is the first missionary he sent into the mission field after being called as bishop. “It’s exciting to have a son serve,” he says. “We all missed Alex, but I’m the one who missed him the most. He is the one who supported me.”

If Latter-day Saints are good examples, Alex says, others will eventually take notice. “If we are happy and content in the Church, others are going to want to partake of our happiness. If we endure and move forward, miracles can occur.” ■