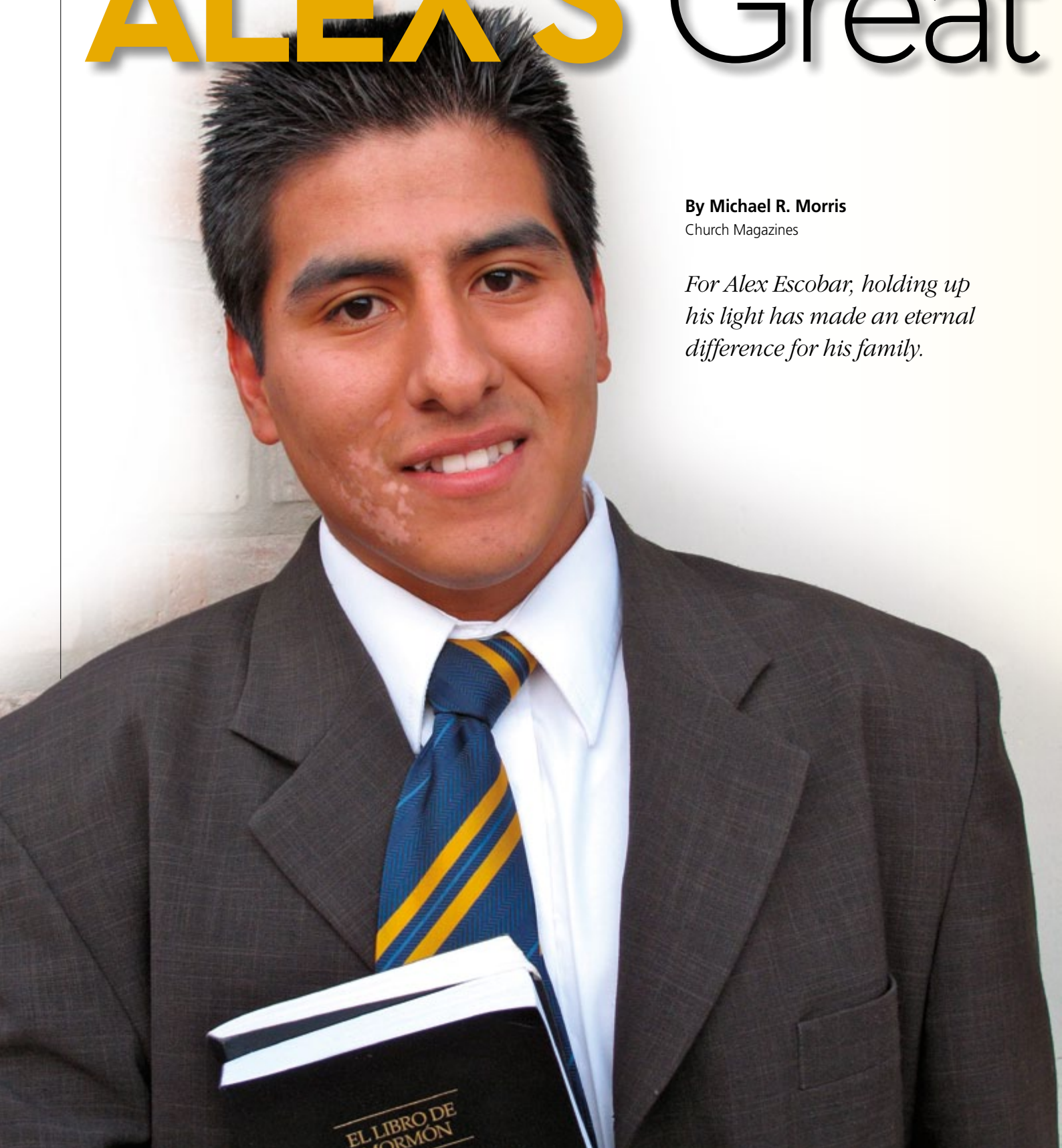


ALEX'S Great

By Michael R. Morris
Church Magazines

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



Example



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

That's because Alex's father hadn't been to church for almost a decade. But Alex, who at the time was attending Sunday meetings 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 serving as bishop when Alex was a young Aaronic Priesthood holder, credits Alex's testimony and his dedicated Young Men leaders, who took a special interest in him. Alex agrees.

"If I didn't show up on Sunday, my leaders came looking for me at home," 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 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 and given a missionary name tag. "That surprised me, and I realized I needed to serve a mission," he says. He began preparing but didn't wait until he was 19 to begin sharing the gospel; he started with his own family. Bishop Sayas says Alex was at the center of ward efforts to help his family return to church.

"Alex always prayed for and encouraged his family," he says. "And he would always encourage his older brothers to attend church. For a while, they listened

"I kept going to church. I knew that only through the gospel of Jesus Christ could we be happy forever as a family," says Alex, pictured below with his sister, Joselina, and his parents, René and Carmen Escobar. Above: La Cañada stream, Córdoba, Argentina.





and attended with him. The effort to bring his family back took a long time, but it succeeded because of Alex.”

Alex also shared the gospel with two of his uncles who had moved to Córdoba from Bolivia. They became interested and were soon baptized with their families.

“I Was the Hardheaded One”

When Alex’s father, René Escobar, 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. In Bolivia, René says, they lost



Alex, currently serving in the Argentina Resistencia Mission, realized as a young man the importance of missionary work. He didn’t wait until he was 19, however, before sharing the gospel with others, beginning with his own less-active family. Above: downtown Córdoba.

contact with the Church and forgot “what the gospel means to our lives.”

Upon returning to Córdoba two years later, Alex’s mother, Carmen, occasionally attended church with the couple’s four children. But René, an avid soccer 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. “Brothers from church often visited me, sometimes finding me in situations that weren’t very good. At times I thought I was completely lost, which we think when we no longer have the companionship of the Spirit. This all contributed to a belief that I couldn’t get back on the Lord’s path.”

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 and change. “I asked myself, ‘What am I doing to my children?’ 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.”

Carmen and the children were surprised but elated by his turnaround. “One day he announced, ‘I’m going to change my life. From now on, I’m not going to drink, and we’re going to church.’ I couldn’t believe it,” says Carmen.

Alex’s sister, Joselina, is grateful for the unity that has come to the family since her



“If we are happy and content in the Church, others are going to want to partake of our happiness,” says Alex, pictured at left teaching the Ernesto and Nadia Molina family in Resistencia, Argentina, with his companion, Elder Tom Browning. Above: San Martín Square in Córdoba.



father returned to church. “Today he is nothing like he was before,” she says. “He made a 180-degree change.”

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

“The result is that today my father is my bishop,” Alex said a few weeks before leaving on his mission.

The Importance of Example

With Alex serving in the Argentina Resistencia Mission in northern Argentina, things aren’t the same in the Escobar home. Everyone misses him, but they’re grateful he is preaching the gospel and sharing his example with others. And they’re grateful to be an eternal family, 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 that he didn’t give up on us and that our brothers and sisters in the Church didn’t forget about 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 miss Alex because he is everything to us. But I’m the one who misses him the most. He is one of my anchors. 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.” **NE**



Watch a Video

To view a video about two young women from Ukraine who also helped bring their family members back to the Church, visit lds.org/go/11E.