

Life-Changing Leadership

Latter-day Saints throughout the world share how leadership has blessed their lives, either by serving as a leader or by being served.

A Leader of One

When I turned 12 years old, I was the only young man attending my ward in Cape Town, South Africa. Even so, my bishop felt inspired to call a Young Men presidency.

My Young Men president could have said to himself, “What am I supposed to do with only one young man? We cannot organize activities for only one.” Instead, he gave of his best and magnified his calling. The presidency organized hikes, camps, Scouting activities, Mutual evenings on Tuesday nights, lessons on Sundays, sand boarding, and activities at the beach. After a while, other young men began coming out—two, then three, and then four.

I am filled with gratitude that these Young Men leaders were faithful in their callings and made an effort for just one young man—me. I am a better person because they didn’t give up and so are the others who participated in the Young Men program in our ward.

Greg Burgoyne, South Africa

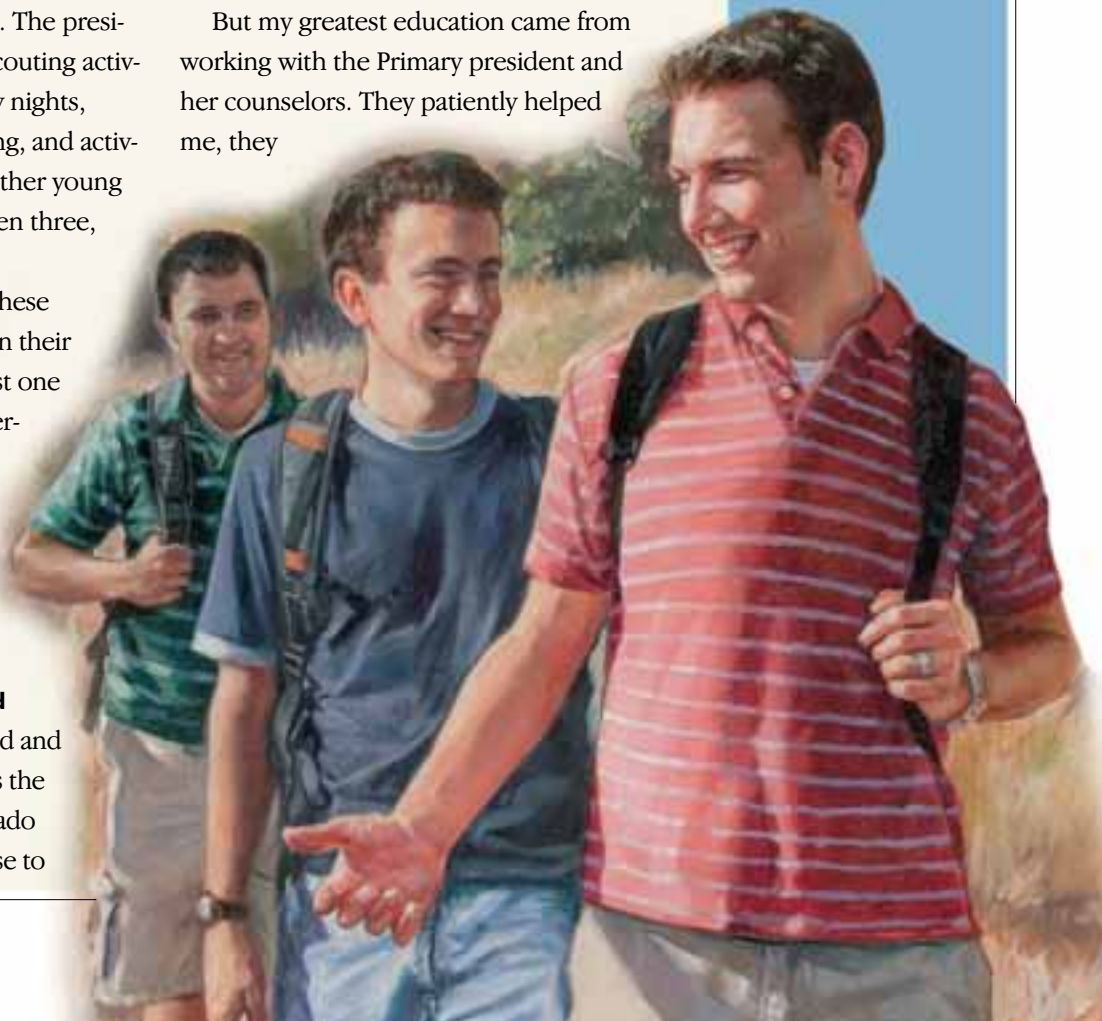
Little by Little, I Learned to Lead

A few weeks after I was baptized and confirmed, I was called to serve as the Primary secretary in the Valle Dorado Ward in Mexico. This was a surprise to

me because I was new in the gospel, but I loved my Savior and wanted to serve.

I told my bishop that many other people could do the job better, but through serving I learned that the calling had been inspired. By being with the children in Primary, I learned the principles of the gospel, beautiful hymns, and the Articles of Faith. I loved the little ones too, and through them I met their parents.

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My greatest education came from working with the Primary president and her counselors. They patiently helped me, they forgave my mistakes, and little by little, I learned how to fulfill my calling.

forgave my mistakes, and little by little, I learned how to fulfill my calling. We worked together in the Primary for three years and became close friends.

When we were released, we were called to serve in Relief Society. As a result of the love we shared, we served together in unity for two more years. These sisters taught me to delegate responsibility and to allow others to learn to become leaders. We shared food storage, fasted for a purpose, and went to the temple together. They helped me become a faithful, dedicated, and loving leader. I feel obligated to share what I learned so other sisters will have the same kind of experience that I had working with the sisters who trained me.

Laura Viga D'Alva, Mexico

I'm Simply Not Prepared

Three weeks after my baptism and confirmation, Bishop Ayala interviewed me and asked how I was progressing. I replied, "Very well. I have finished reading the Book of

Mormon for the second time. I'm also reading the *Gospel Principles* manual so I can learn more and put into practice what I'm reading."

Then he said, "Your Heavenly Father is mindful of you and is calling you to be a Sunday School teacher for the youth ages 14 to 17."

Immediately I realized that several of the youth in the class, who were just a few years younger than I was, had been raised in the Church and knew the gospel better than I did.

I said to him, "I'm not ready for this kind of an assignment."

The bishop replied, speaking very deliberately, "Roberto, Heavenly Father is the one extending this calling to you. He knows your abilities and your faithfulness."

"I'm simply not prepared. I need more time," I persisted.

The bishop looked straight into my eyes and said serenely but in a strong voice, "If you feel you can't accept this calling, you shouldn't tell me. Kneel down and tell your Heavenly

Father. He will answer you, and I will accept your decision.”

A prolonged silence followed. Then, looking at me the way a father looks at his son, he said, “Roberto, this isn’t a church of cowards; it is a church of courageous people.”

My heart was suddenly contrite. With tears in my eyes and a voice filled with emotion, I said, “Bishop, when do I start?”

He embraced me, slapped me on the back, and said, “I’m going to help you prepare your first lesson this week.”

I was filled with joy to know that Heavenly Father had given me such a special leader, a bishop who taught not only by word but by example.

I remembered this experience often during my mission and while serving in other callings. I think of it now and feel grateful to Heavenly Father to be a member of the Lord’s Church.

Roberto Carlos Pacheco Pretel, Peru

Dedicated Deacons

One of my sisters-in-law in Guatemala had been going through a stressful time, which triggered some health problems. My wife and I prayed for her, but we didn’t know what else to do. Then I was able to visit my in-laws on a business trip to my homeland of Guatemala, where I learned this beautiful lesson in leadership.

I was talking with my father-in-law on the patio when one of the 12-year-old boys in the ward passed by and said hello. After he passed by, my father-in-law said, “That little fellow and two other boys the same age really surprised me the other day. The three of them came over, all dressed up in their white shirts and ties. After greeting me, to my surprise they headed for the living room to visit with my daughter. They told her that they had come to visit her because they knew of the health challenges she was having. They said that although they were deacons and could not give her a blessing, they could pray for her, and Jesus Christ would bless her.

“Those three young men knelt and offered a wonderful prayer and asked our Heavenly Father to bless my daughter. Then they stood up, and after expressing their love for her, they left.



“You know what?” my father-in-law continued. “I was very impressed by the great example of those young men.”

The next day as I attended sacrament meeting, I saw the three young men dressed up and ready to pass the sacrament. I felt admiration and respect for them. When the meeting was over, I went to shake their hands, which were small in size but powerful in their ability to lift up tired and heavy spirits. May God bless those young men for their example of service, love, and faith.

Óscar Abad Gutierrez, Utah

He Wanted to Talk to My Mother?

Since I have been a member of the Church, I have had a sincere desire to keep the commandments. Paying tithing, however, was a challenge because my mother, who was not a Latter-day Saint, would not allow it.

When I got paid, I set aside money for tithing in one of my drawers. But when the day came to return the money to the Lord, it wasn't there. I asked my mother if she had seen it, and she answered that she had spent it because the Lord did not need it. I did not argue with her, for I believed there was another way to resolve this problem.

Because I was not able to pay my tithing, I was sad for a long time. When I went to my bishop's office for tithing settlement, he asked if I was a full-tithe payer, and with tears in my eyes I told him I was not because my mother had taken my tithing money. My bishop comforted me by saying that the Lord knew the desires of my heart. Then he

asked me to bring my mother in for an interview that Wednesday. I agreed.

During that week I asked myself, “How can I take my mother for an interview with the bishop if she is not a Church member? She won't accept the invitation!”

When Wednesday arrived I had not said anything to her, so I simply asked her to come with me to the meeting-house, explaining that I did not want to go alone. Luckily, she said she would go.

Bishop Feitosa received her kindly and led her into his office. I was very anxious while my mother was in there. Finally my mother came out of his office—with a smile.

On the way home, my mother looked at me and said, “From now on you are going to pay your tithing every month.” What joy filled my heart! The Lord had prepared a means for my mother to understand my desire to observe this sacred commandment.

My mother has since joined the Church. She pays her tithing and makes sure I pay mine. We have received marvelous blessings from keeping this commandment because an inspired leader spoke with my mother about sacrifice, dedication, and faithfulness to the Lord.

Evanilda Gomes do Nascimento, Brazil

Go Talk to Him

In 1998, when I was Young Men president in my ward, I participated in a stake youth camp. As I was resting after a game, I saw a young man I didn't know. He was sitting

INSTRUMENTS IN HIS HANDS



“A leader must cause things to happen and lives to be affected. Something should move and change. He must see that those under him do not fail. But it should be done in the Lord's way. He should be the

instrument in the hands of the Almighty for changing lives. He needs to know where he is now, where he is going, and how he is going to get there.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “These I Will Make My Leaders,” Ensign, Nov. 1980, 35.



alone on a little mound away from the camp. He had an unpleasant expression on his face. I felt I needed to go over and talk to him.

I introduced myself and asked his name. I don't remember all that we talked about, but I do remember that I shed a few tears. It was a special conversation that lasted until they called us to the next activity. I rarely saw the young man after that and never had another chance to talk to him.

In August 2005 we had a meeting at our stake center. This same young man came up to me and gave me a letter. It read:

I started thinking today about our conversation in San Martin Park in about 1998. Just to remind you, I was sitting by myself and feeling a bit sad. You came up to me and said you felt you needed to talk to me. You said . . . the time had come to choose—either to stay with the Church and follow Jesus Christ or leave it and not enjoy the blessings that come from activity in the

Church. The one thing that really stayed with me was when you said that if I fell, my whole family would fall with me, but if I would keep moving forward, they would come too.

. . . A great desire arose in me to help them. . . . So from the day we had that talk, I made the decision to be faithful to the Lord, and even now, after seven years, I am still faithful, and my family is firm in the gospel and faithful to the Lord. . . . Thank you so much for being so straightforward and truthful with me. You'll never know how much good it did.

This young man is now a returned missionary who has been married in the temple. I am grateful to the Lord for giving me the opportunity to serve as a leader. I am grateful to come to understand the importance of putting myself in others' shoes so I can try to understand what they are going through. ■

Alejandro Humberto Villarreal, Argentina

When I told my bishop that my mother would not let me pay tithing, he asked me to bring her in for an interview.