



Who shows you how to live the gospel? You may have more examples than you realize.

BY ELDER BENSON E. MISALUCHA
Area Seventy, Philippines Area

Most testimonies don't happen in a blinding flash of light. You gain gospel knowledge over time, and you learn to rely on good feelings prompted by the Holy Ghost. Along the way, there are many people who serve as role models: those who inspire us to live as we should live. You will strengthen your testimony and learn to be obedient by following their examples.

Missionaries

The first role models who presented the gospel to me were the missionaries who taught my family in the Philippines. Their example had a lot of influence in our decision to join the Church. They were patient



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with us, and they always brought a wonderful spirit with them.

While we were still new members, we encountered a man who had left the Church. He gave us a lot of anti-Mormon literature, and I was shocked. It was my first encounter with opposition to the Church, and my testimony was still tender. While he was confronting us and attacking everything the missionaries had taught us, I was filled with fear. But when the missionaries were with us, they brought peace. Because of the missionaries, our family learned to tell the difference between faith and fear, and we chose faith.

Mission Presidents

My father and I were soon assigned as home teaching companions. One of our first assignments was to visit the mission president and his wife. They were very gracious. My father brought a lot of traditions from our previous faith. But they were kind, not critical, in explaining why things were done in different ways in the true Church. We were the home teachers, but we learned a lot from the example of our mission president.

Later, when I became a full-time missionary, I continued to learn from mission presidents. My first president always had a firm belief that things would eventually go well, even when times were tough. From him, I learned to be positive.

My second mission president was a former fighter pilot, but as a Church leader, he

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND; KING BENJAMIN PREACHES TO THE NEPHITES, BY GARY KAPP; INSET: KING BENJAMIN SPEAKING, BY JERRY THOMPSON

MODELS



was tenderhearted and sensitive, filled with Christlike love for his fellow servants. While I was an assistant to him, I felt that some missionaries were abusing certain privileges and taking advantage of his kindness. I suggested we create stricter rules with stronger enforcement. He said he felt it would be better to trust the missionaries to choose the right rather than doubting their intentions. From this role model, I learned to follow Joseph Smith's advice to teach correct principles and let people govern themselves.



Left: Missionaries can be great examples to those they teach. Above: King Benjamin was a role model to his people. After he spoke to them, the people had a mighty change of heart.

Other Church Leaders

I remember watching Elder Dallin H. Oaks when, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he served as Area President in the Philippines. I saw him counsel with others about the challenges facing the Church in our country. I saw the great love he has for building the Church and creating opportunities to bless members' lives. From his example I learned that Apostles care not only about the Church as a whole but also about individuals.

Our current Area President, Elder Keith R. Edwards of the Seventy, says that although there is an administrative side to Church work, the Lord wants us to focus on the heart. He reminds us about King Benjamin's experience talking from the tower and how the people responded with a mighty change of heart. They had "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). From Elder Edwards, I have learned to look at my own heart, to make sure my intentions are pure.



Captain Moroni

The scriptures are full of great role models. Captain Moroni is one of my personal heroes. Mormon admired Moroni so much that he named his son after him. Mormon wrote of Captain Moroni: "If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men" (Alma 48:17). Mormon also said that he admired the sons of Mosiah and Alma and his sons because "they were all men of God" (Alma 48:18). Let your role models be men and women of God!

Nephi

Another great example from the scriptures is Nephi. From him, I learned to trust the Lord rather than complain. Let me explain. When I left the Philippines to get a master's degree at Brigham Young University, I promised that I would come back. When the time came for my family and me to return, the decision was not easy because I thought that opportunities in my home country were not as promising or rewarding as those in the United States. But because I had given my word, my wife and I decided to exercise faith as Nephi and do what the Lord would have us do.

Even though I had already worked before, I had to start over financially. Money was scarce, and opportunities took time to bear fruit. Then all three of our children got sick, and our savings disappeared. It was one of the toughest times of our lives.

Our youngest son developed a type of tuberculosis. He had to have medicine that was expensive, and he had to take it for nine months. I remember looking in my wallet, and there was no money. My wife asked me how we would be able to feed the children.

During those times, you ask questions. And if you're not careful, you can become like Laman and Lemuel and start murmuring and become bitter. You feel like life is unfair. It would have been easy for me to think: "I'm a returned missionary. I served the Lord. We pay our tithing. We serve in the Church. Where are the blessings?" But we remained active, we served in our callings, and we got by. My brother and his wife helped us financially, and I finally found a job. It was barely enough, and it paid less than what I had earned before I left for school. I felt I was a failure.

Finally, after several years, my wife and I decided that wondering and worrying weren't helping. We said, "Let's stop murmuring, trust in the Lord, and be happy with what we have." And right after that, things turned around. I got several job offers and was able to choose the best one. I was called as the bishop of our ward. It seemed the blessings just flowed.

As bishop I discovered how the difficult times I had been through helped me help others. In particular, I remember listening to a member who was going through tough times financially, and I felt compassion. I could not have had that compassion if I had not gone

through similar things myself. And I remembered what Nephi said: "As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us" (1 Nephi 3:15).

I remembered how, when they were in the ship coming to the promised land, that even though he had been bound for days and had swollen wrists and ankles, Nephi said, "Nevertheless, I did look unto my God, and I did praise him all the day long; and I did not murmur against the Lord because of mine afflictions" (1 Nephi 18:16). So I told the member that most of us have a long way to go to become like Nephi, but he is a good role model. I was able to help that member see that the answer is not in murmuring but in doing what the Lord has commanded, because He will surely prepare a way (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

Left: Captain Moroni was such a strong leader that Mormon later wrote, "If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever." Below: Nephi's example teaches us to trust the Lord rather than complain.





The ultimate role model for our mortal lives is the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. All of our righteous behaviors and actions spring from our faith in our Redeemer.

Parents

Like Nephi, I was certainly fortunate to be born of goodly parents. My mother was a virtuous and strong woman. I am the kind of person I am today because of the solid gospel foundation she established in our home. My father too, though not perfect, was a great role model for me. He would make sure we were on the right track, but he would always ask us, “What do you think?” And he would listen.

He became interested in the Church because he saw a sign that said “No other success can compensate for failure in the home.” He really believed that. He loved his family and worked hard to provide for our needs.

There was a time when the large pharmaceutical company he worked for kept giving him more and more responsibilities, and that meant more and more travel. It got to the point that he was home only three days a month. Then all of a sudden, we learned that

he had resigned from his longtime job and promising career opportunities.

I remember that at our next family council meeting he said we would need to tighten our belts for the next few months while he looked for a new job. We asked him why he had resigned, and his response will stay with us forever: “You all are growing up to be teenagers already, and that’s a very important time in your lives. I never would like a time to come when you would tell me, ‘Where were you when we needed you?’” He put his family first.

Following My Father’s Example

Because of that example from my father, years later I was able to make a similar decision. I had just been hired by a consulting company, and they flew six of us employees from the Philippines to Sydney, Australia, to join with 400 managers from all over the world for training. We flew first class.

A limousine picked us up at the airport and whisked us away to a five-star hotel, where each room had a big basket of goodies. The company wanted to show us that this was a good company to work for, and it wanted its new hires to stay.

After the first day of meetings, we had a gala dinner, a formal affair. We sat about 12 to a table, each with 10 managers and 2 managing partners who were to be our role models in the company. They told us stories about how they started in the company and grew in their careers with it. They told us of multimillion dollar deals they had closed, important businesspeople they had worked with, and major projects they had directed. I heard the names of Fortune 500 CEOs mentioned frequently and was in awe of these men because of the work they did.

We were all feeling great about our opportunities until one of the people at the table asked, “How does your wife handle all of your traveling? You’re constantly gone.” And one of the partners answered, “I was just divorced two years ago.” And the other partner at our table said, “I’ve been divorced for five years.”

I remember my thoughts: “These are not the men I want to be. I don’t think I want to work for this company because I don’t care much about worldly accomplishments if my family is in disarray.” The example of my father made it easy for me to decide to put my family first, and I found another job that allowed me to do so.

The Savior

The ultimate role model for our mortal lives is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was perfect in every way and who gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. All of our righteous behaviors and actions spring from our faith in our Redeemer, and that faith springs from our testimony of who He is and what He has done for us. I am truly grateful for His sacrifice. I testify that He lives and that He wants each one of us to live a worthy life so that we can return and live with our Heavenly Father. If we follow the Savior and become more like our Father in Heaven, we will certainly be blessed.

Why Role Models?

Following good role models is a key to your future. You will end up being like those you look up to, so find good heroes, and try to live as they would live. Consider eternal things as the measurement of who your role models should be. Look to the good examples in your own family, and pattern yourself after them. Look at others who pattern their lives after the Savior, and pattern your life after them.

Choose your role models wisely because they become your heroes. You will remember what they would do, and that becomes your pattern, enabling you to make wise decisions. And before you know it, others will be looking up to you and patterning their good behavior based on a role model they admire—you. ■

NINE LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER

One of my best role models was my father. Here are some of the things he taught me:

1. *Believe in God.* Faith in Him will get you through life’s storms.
2. *Be honest and upright.* Live a clean life, true to your principles and without deceit.
3. *Dream and dream big.* Righteous dreams do come true.
4. *Share inspiring stories.* Stories move us and connect us as human beings.
5. *Read a lot.* If knowledge is power, reading is your access to that power.
6. *Work hard.* Work is a blessing.
7. *Give freely.* What you give or how much matters little, only that you give often and give what you can.
8. *Enjoy clean humor.* Laughter unlocks your heart and makes life fun.
9. *Let music soothe you.* Worthy music speaks to your soul.