

Episode 19

Stories from General Conference

EXAMPLE, VOL. 2

NARRATOR: **The topic of this collection of Stories from General Conference is the power of Example, Volume 2. You're listening to the Mormon Channel.**

When someone is willing to stand up for what they believe, especially when they feel they are standing alone, a powerful statement is made. They become an example and create a pattern that will build a higher standard for those willing to follow. Elder M. Russell Ballard in the October 1997 Priesthood session spoke about a group of young boys who had the courage to stand up and follow the examples of those who went before them.

(Elder M. Russell Ballard, Priesthood Session, October 1997)

"I know it is sometimes hard to stand for truth and right. Yet we need to be positive examples if we are to help others find a better way. Thankfully, we can draw strength from those who have gone before us. While the road they walked may have been different from the road we walk today, the courage required to be faithful is similar, and their experiences are instructive.

As a boy growing up in Nauvoo, George Q. Cannon learned to cope with those who would do harm to others. In his own words, he tells how he and a group of boys his age did their part to defend the Saints against potential troublemakers:

"It was . . . a common practice . . . , when engaged in conversation or in making a bargain, to take out . . . pocket knives and commence whittling; frequently, . . . accompanying the whittling by whistling. No person could object, therefore, to the practices of whittling and whistling. Many of the boys of the city had each a large bowie knife made, and when a man came to town who was known to be a villain, and was there for evil purposes, a few of them would get together, and go to where the obnoxious person was, and having previously provided themselves with pine shingles, would commence whittling. The presence of a number of boys, each [harmlessly] whittling . . . was not a sight to escape the notice of a stranger. . . . His first [reaction] . . . would be to . . . ask what this meant. The boys would make no reply, but with grave faces, keep up their [harmless] whistling. . . . What could the man do? If he was armed, he could shoot; but the resolute expression of the boys' faces, and the gleaming knives . . . would convince him that discretion was the better part of valor. . . . The most we ever knew them to do was to stand for awhile and curse and threaten. . . . Then they would walk off . . . , followed by the troop of boys vigorously whittling and whistling."

Now, I'm not suggesting that we begin issuing bowie knives to our deacons. But I am suggesting that George Q. Cannon and his youthful associates exhibited great courage and faith by their actions. They saw something that needed to be done, and they did it safely within the context of what was appropriate for the times. I'm impressed by their willingness to take a stand against wicked intentions of others."

NARRATOR: Being a good example is not always easy. It takes courage and faith, but in the end it's always the right thing to do.

It's important to live the principles of the Gospel and share your beliefs with others. Bishop H. David Burton, in the October 1998 General Conference, illustrated this through a personal experience that had a profound effect on him and his wife.

(Bishop H. David Burton, Saturday Morning Session, October 1998)

Over and over again we have been reminded from this pulpit to fully observe the Sabbath day. If we are not keeping the Sabbath day holy, today is a wonderful time to commit to seize that opportunity, to receive the promised blessings that come from Sabbath day observance.

Many have come to feel that the terms "Sabbath day" and "play day" are synonymous. A friend who manages several small retail outlets in predominantly LDS communities tells me he can precisely tell when Sunday worship services conclude because customer counts increase dramatically. Recreation in its various forms has become "king of the Sabbath day."

When Sister Burton and I were first married, we lived in the southeast part of the Salt Lake Valley. On occasion, as we purchased groceries from a small neighborhood store, we observed President and Sister Joseph Fielding Smith in the same store making their purchases. After several such observations, I finally mustered the courage to inquire of President Smith why it was he traveled all the way from downtown, past a dozen grocery stores, to shop at this particular store. Looking over the tops of his glasses he emphatically said: "Son! [He had my immediate attention.] Sister Smith and I patronize establishments that keep the Sabbath day holy."

The need to reverence the Sabbath day is not new counsel. We are only being told today what prior generations have been told by the prophets of their day and reconfirmed countless times by the prophets of our day. Latter-day scripture contains the following admonition:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High" (D&C 59:910).

Now, I know it's hard, particularly for our young people, to choose to observe the Sabbath day when athletic teams on which they so much want to participate regularly schedule games on Sunday. I too know it seems trivial to many who are in need of just a few items on the Sabbath to quickly stop at a convenience store to make a Sunday purchase. But I also know that remembering to keep the Sabbath day holy is one of the most important commandments we can observe in preparing us to be the recipients of the whisperings of the Spirit.

This is the season of opportunity for families to stand tall and be counted among the faithful who obey the fourth great commandment:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Ex. 20:810).

NARRATOR: As we stand tall and show the Lord our dedication to his gospel, our faith will grow. There will be little room for fear to distract us from doing his work. President James E. Faust in the Priesthood session of the October 1997 General Conference spoke of a young boy who didn't let fear discourage him.

(President James E. Faust, Priesthood Session, October 1997)

"We can overcome all of our fears, not all at once, but one at a time. As we do so we will grow in confidence. The following is the story of a young man who encountered a fear that each one of us has faced or will face at some time in our lives.

It was a hot July afternoon, and the chapel was filled for stake priesthood meeting. There was a young priest sitting on the stand in "contained nervousness," and after the hymn the stake president announced him as the next speaker.

He spread out his notes, and as he did so his quivering hands betrayed his fear. He began to speak, but soon his speech quickened to a gabble, his words wild and repetitive. Worse followed as he began to stammer and then stopped speaking altogether.

A heavy silence settled on the room. Who has not felt the terror of standing before an awesome audience? Everyone thought he would sit down, but no, he stayed on his feet, his head down. A few ominous seconds ticked by, and then he squared his shoulders and blurted out: "Brethren, I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers, that I might have sureness of speech."

Then he went back to where he had left off, speaking quietly but clearly. Soon his voice rose to its natural resonance, and he delivered his message to its full conclusion. It was not so much his message that thrilled those who were there. It was the image of that young man, unflinching even though he felt himself teetering on a precipice of fear, taking up the banner of courage and rallying himself for the cause of truth."

NARRATOR:

What an incredible example this young man was! He was able to put the work of the Lord above his own fears. This experience strengthened the faith of everyone present. Our example will always be a reflection of what we believe and it can encourage others to better themselves.

In the April 2009 General Conference, Elder Quentin L. Cook spoke of a famous man whose view of the Church changed through the example of members he met.

(Elder Quentin L. Cook, Saturday Afternoon Session, April 2009)

In 1863 Charles Dickens, the English novelist, went on board the passenger ship *Amazon*, which was bound for New York. His purpose was to report on the Latter-day Saint converts who were emigrating to build up the Church in the American West. There had been thousands of converts who had already emigrated, and much had been written, particularly in the British media, about them and their beliefs. Most of what was written was unfavorable.

“I went on board their ship,” wrote Dickens, “to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would; to my great astonishment they did not deserve it.”

After observing and mingling with the converts, Dickens was impressed with them and described these English converts, most of whom were laborers, as being “in their degree, the pick and flower of England.”

NARRATOR:

By small and simple things great things will come to pass. The example of those early members of the Church on the ship changed the famous author’s view of the Church and in turn, likely many more through his writings. Each individual can make a difference as we choose to follow the example of the Savior and encourage those around us to do the same.

This has been Stories from General Conference, on the topic of the power of example, Volume 2, here on the Mormon Channel.

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