

LEADERSHIP JOURNAL

CHRISTOPHER FARMER



IMAGE: <http://bit.ly/etwGi0>

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Each week, I read 2 articles about leadership and record my thoughts in a journal. We were given a topic and a prompt to write about, although we could deviate from the given topic if we felt inspired. The result was 10 weeks of leadership centered self-reflection and contemplation. I have included all 10 of my entries in this leadership journal.



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LEADERS IN YOUR LIFE

PROMPT: What leaders, past or present, do you admire most? What is it about them that you admire? Which of these leaders do you consider to be authentic leaders? What can you learn from their leadership?

Any discussion of leadership cannot be complete with Jesus Christ. He was the ultimate leader. He organized his church and established the Gospel. Christ did this through leading by example. He did not sit back and rest on his credentials. He could have said "I am the Son of God, you there get to work and I will tell you when you get it right." However, this was not in his character. Instead, he led by example. He led a perfect life and invited everyone to follow him and live the way that he did. This is an incredible example of leadership and one that would do well in the business world. If every CEO led by saying follow my example, what great companies we could have! I imagine that quite a few CEO's would be fired as a result of the paradigm shift.

Another leader that I greatly admire is John Huntsman. He was born and raised in poverty yet he educated himself and grew his company to the point of where he was personally worth over \$10 billion. I admire his work ethic in pushing himself to get an education, and take over a small chemical company. I admire his ability to rally his employees in many different countries all around the world. Above all, I admire Jon Huntsman for his integrity. He has always done the right thing no matter what the consequence. He is famous for working on handshake agreements. This is very impressive to me considering how everyone seems to be paranoid and wants their lawyers to draft thousands of documents in order to get anything done. Jon Huntsman has also come to great lengths to give charitable donations and pursue philanthropic goals. His family has to keep him from "giving away the store" and driving himself broke by him giving so much away. I truly admire this great leader.

Another leader that I admire is the leader of my family; my father. My father has led by example in teaching me about hard work. My father is the hardest working man I know. He never gives up and always completes any project that he sets out to do. Not only does he complete a project, but he makes it the highest quality and most impressive that he can. This kind of work ethic has actually taken him from being a janitor to top level management at his current employer. This incredible example of leadership has inspired me to become a manager in the future.

I have learned from these great leaders that you must lead by example. If you live and work the way that you know to be right, others will follow and be inspired by your example. I have learned that no matter what, integrity is the most important asset you have in the business world. Giving to others and offering a helping hand is a noble pursuit that brings true fulfillment and joy in this life. Hard work will take you places as long as you strive to the highest degrees of quality and dedication. This is what I have learned from leaders past and present.

LEADERS IN THE SCRIPTURES

PROMPT: What leaders in the scriptures do you admire most? What is it about them that you admire? Which of these leaders do you consider to be authentic leaders? What can you learn from their leadership?

The scriptures are full of excellent examples of leadership. I believe that all of the righteous leaders found in the scriptures are authentic leaders. If they were not authentic leaders, then they would not have been included in the scriptures. With that said, there are many lessons that we can learn from these admired leaders. Let's examine who I admire most from the scriptures.

From the Bible and the Pearl of Great Price I truly admire Abraham. Abraham gave up everything that he valued the most to follow the Lord. When Abraham was young, the Lord instructed him to leave his home, his family, and his area of residence. This was very difficult for Abraham to pack up and leave, however he did not



refrain from giving the Lord what was asked of him. After Abraham followed this commandment, he and his wife began to try to have children. They could not have children. However, the Lord commanded Abraham to take concubines in order to produce children. Abraham was very sad because he and his wife wanted nothing more than to have a son with his wife. However, Abraham again was obedient to the commandments of the Lord.

After Abraham was obedient, he and his wife were finally blessed with a son of their own. They were overjoyed when Isaac was born. Then, the Lord asked Abraham to take his son to the altar and to kill him. This was especially traumatic for Abraham because he had been taken and placed on an altar when he was young. Only the Lord's hand had saved Abraham from being murdered on the idolatrous altar. Now we find Abraham being asked to do the same traumatic thing to his own son! Abraham does not refuse the Lord and is in the very act of moving the knife to kill his son when the Lord stops him and commends him for his obedience. As a result of his obedience, Abraham was blessed with the riches of the earth, but more importantly the promises and blessings of eternity and the gospel. Abraham is one of the greatest leaders to me because he never stopped following what he knew to be true. He always followed the Lord's commandments and held nothing back. Anyone this committed to their ideals is truly a great leader.

In the Book of Mormon we are given another example of an incredibly great leader. Captain Moroni saw the deterioration of the community and nation around him. He took his coat, tore it in pieces and wrote an inspiring message on it. He then went about rallying others to his cause. He then led them into battle in which they were triumphant. Moroni was humble, faithful, righteous, and hard-working. He did not just command others to go to battle or to shape up. Instead, he led by example and practiced what he was preaching. This excellent example of leadership inspires me to live what I know and never ask anyone to do anything that I myself am not willing to do.

LEADERS LOSING THEIR WAY

PROMPT: Think through the underlying reasons why so many leaders in the recent past or in the scriptures have lost their way and wound up failing as leaders. Have you seen leaders lose their way or worked with someone who fits any archetypes of being an imposter, rationalizer, glory seeker, loner, or shooting star? What are the behaviors and warning signals you have seen in others at risk of losing their way?

There are many examples in our world's past and present that exemplify leaders who have lost their way. An excellent example of this would be Bernie Madoff. Once, he was one of the most respected and trusted investment experts in the world. Now, he is little more than a liar, cheat, and a fraud. There have been examples in the scriptures of leaders who have lost their way in King David, original members of the 12 apostles, and the lower judges found in the chapters of Alma 40-45 (somewhere in there.) There are many behaviors and warnings sign that are characteristics of leaders losing their way. We should learn from these warning signs and be prepared to address them as they appear.

Let's look at the example of Bernie Madoff. He illustrates an excellent red flag when it comes to leadership. The red flag is that if something seems too good to be true, it probably is and you should be scared. This occurred when many members of the press expressed concern about how in the world Bernie's investment company was profitable. Over the decade or so leading up to his arrest, many members of the financial world demonstrated with mathematics how Bernie could not possibly be producing the results that he claimed. Turns out, he was not producing the results he claimed but essentially stealing from new investors to pay off old. He was operating a giant Ponzi scheme and it all went south very quickly. In the scriptural examples of leadership gone awry, we have the example of King David. He was the Lord's chosen and one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the



world. However, he fell into one sin and then committed another, resulting in a 1-2 combo of the worst sins a person can commit. What happened to his inspired leadership? What about members of the 12 apostles who organized the church with Joseph Smith? Many left the church and railed on Joseph Smith afterward. What happened to their leadership? Some of the lower judges in Alma chapters 40-45 (rough estimation) decided to leave the church and attempt to enslave the people. What happened here to the people elected to guard the people and dispense justice?

In all of these examples of failed leadership, I can see a common link in their failures. They all turned their hearts to something other than leadership and their duties / responsibilities. Bernie became obsessed with producing rock-star results and his personal status to the point where he cheated people and stole money until it all came crashing down. King David turned his heart to a woman and then murder in an attempt to hide his sin. The members of the 12 who fell away had their hearts set on position and power within the church. When things did not go according to how they thought it should be, they felt hurt, challenged, and prideful and left the church as a result. The judges in Alma set their hearts on pride, status, and wealth and tried to break power away from the government. In all of these instances, when their hearts were focused on the right thing, they excelled and were blessed. They inspired others and uplifted the people they led. When their hearts turned away from that and gained a new focus, that is when things went very very bad. This should be a lesson to all of us. Watch our leaders and ourselves. When our hearts begin to change and are no longer focused on what we should be doing, we are doomed and must take corrective actions immediately.

YOU AS A LEADER

PROMPT: Thinking back over all your leadership experiences in your lifetime, which ones are you proudest of? Think about the basis for your leadership and the kind of leader you would like to be as you answer these questions: What qualities do you bring to leadership? What leadership qualities would you like to develop further?

I have had many leadership experiences in my life. There have been challenging ones, frustrating ones, and rewarding ones. Time and time again I have felt overwhelmed by the responsibility and challenge of the leadership burden. I have had some experiences that I have been the most proud of.

In the spring of 2010, I started the IBC experience at BYU-Idaho. I was daunted by the task of having to start and participate in a new business that we created ourselves. The class was split up into different companies. Each company had to elect a CEO to lead the company from startup to finish. I was chosen and elected to be the CEO for our company! What a humbling experience and one that caused me to come out of my shell. My problems were primarily that I tended to work by myself in most assignments and that I did not like to confront people when things were going badly.

The company started operations and I quickly had to grow above and beyond my abilities. The Lord blessed me greatly to be able to overcome my shortfalls and to grow as the role demanded. It was extremely difficult to confront people but I quickly realized that as CEO I was expected to confront people and that people were not offended when I did. I also had to deal with what my wife would call the “bad apple” of the company. One student employee did everything he could to go against what we were trying to do as a company. At every turn he threw out criticism and cynical remarks saying that we were ruining the company and destroying the very reason the company had been started in the first place. This is where the true test of my leadership came in. I met every challenge and returned the challenge to him in order for him to research and provide evidence that we were going down the wrong path.



The qualities that I bring to leadership are vision, determination, and an open mind. I always try to capture what we are attempting to do. I constantly analyze our actions to see if we are taking the necessary steps to achieve those goals. I am always open minded and will consider all inputs if someone says that we are off course and need correction. I am very determined and committed to accomplishing everything that is set out to be accomplished.

The leadership qualities that I would like to develop further would be swiftness and confrontation. At times, I consider options way too long before I actually make the decisions. I need to much quicker in my decisiveness. By doing so, I will save time and be more efficient. I think that I can develop this the more that I practice it. I also think that I need to work on confrontation. Often times, I don't want to confront people because it is uncomfortable and it makes people uncomfortable.

YOUR GREATEST CRUCIBLE

PROMPT: Write freely about your greatest crucible or challenge and describe it in the following ways: How did you feel at the time? What resources did you call upon? How did you resolve the issues, if you have? How did it shape you and your views about the world?

I really enjoyed the Harvard article this week because it touched home with me. I have viewed my life as a series of crucibles that have molded and shaped me into who I am today. I would not trade any of these invaluable lessons for anything. Some of have been very simple situations while others have been all-consuming that have pushed me to my breaking point and beyond. The most sacred of these experiences involve the Lord's hand in my life. The greatest and most difficult crucibles have been those when I have completely submitted my will to the will of the Lord and been obedient to the direction of the Holy Ghost. These have been the crucibles that have caused me to break and be rebuilt, as a phoenix, from the ashes of my life. These are the experiences that have been the greatest value and benefit to my life. The Lord has tested who I am and molded me in the refiner's fire. These experiences are sacred and as such I will not share them here.

One of the greatest leadership crucibles in my life happened in the summer of 2010 when I become CEO of an IBC company called RexCream. By nature, I am not a confrontational person and I am very sensitive to others around me. However, as CEO I was required to be forceful and made decisions. I had to demand performance from people who were not getting paid. Most of them did not want to really be there but had to in order to pass the class. One employee in particular was the driving force behind this particular crucible. We started out by brainstorming ideas for for our business models. The entire company of 20+ students had to agree on one idea. We decided to sell ice cream. The vote was unanimous and we proceeded to create a business plan to be presented to the loan committee. Our loan was approved, we purchased inventory, and we prepared to open for the first day of business. This particular employee began causing trouble almost immediately. He began to become very negative and started arguing against any ideas except for his own. He tried taking over conversations and butting into projects that were not his own. One day, He called to tell me that we had completely destroyed the original concept of the business and that we were going to completely fail. He said that we had chosen the wrong products to offer and he was certain that everything we were doing was wrong.

This was a turning point in my leadership career. The funny thing is, I didn't realize until later that I gave a very good response to this challenge to my leadership and the direction of the company. I listened, showed empathy, and let this employee have his say. He blew off a lot of steam and frustration and I showed that I could see where he was coming from as well as why he was upset. I decided to place the responsibility for his accusations at his feet. I told him that I was working on weeks of research, focus groups, and planning in order to start running our



business. I told him that if could produce data from focus groups or other statistics that backed up his claim, that I would be more than happy to make changes to the business model. I told him that I would be stupid as a CEO if he showed me evidence we were wrong and I ignored him. So, I challenged him to hold further focus groups and deliver me the data. When I had hard data proving our current course of action to be bad, I would be an idiot if I didn't change course.

This was a great lesson to me because it taught me how to deal with toxic people. It showed me the power of letting people just vent to you and actually listening to them. I also gained the strength to stand my ground about my previous decisions while welcoming new ideas and fresh perspectives. This crucible has produced character strengths within me that will prove invaluable during the rest of my life.

MY VALUES

PROMPT: List the values that are important to your life and your leadership. After you have done so, go back and rank them in order of their importance to you. Which of your values are inviolate? Which ones are desirable but not mandatory? Do some of your values depend upon the situation that you are facing? Recall a situation in which your values were tested under pressure. To what extent did you deviate from your values under that pressure? What resources did you call upon under that pressure? What would you do differently if you had to do it all over again?

I believe that life and leadership are one in the same. If we are to become good and honest leaders, how can our lives be any different than our leadership? Are we to act one way at work and one way in our personal lives? If we participate in this style of two-faced living, we will destroy the very thing that makes us powerful, trustworthy, and capable. That being said, I do agree that we may use one command style at work and one command style at home. However, the underlying values behind our behaviors should never change no matter that the circumstance.

In my life, and thus my leadership, I hold 4 values above all else: Integrity, dedication, and charity. All of these values are inviolate. They cannot be changed or given up in order to comply to situations. I go to great lengths and put myself through intense scrutiny in order to ensure that I hold true to these principles. Integrity is highly valuable because it means doing the right thing at all times. Integrity encompasses honesty, fairness, and accepting only that which rightfully belongs to you. Dedication is imperative because without out, nothing will get accomplished. Obedience to the gospel is encompassed by dedication. What is dedication other than constant obedience to a principle or goal? Charity is helping someone other than yourself whenever the opportunity arises. Often times, charity does not present itself in an obvious manner. I believe that a Christ-like perspective is the key to practicing charity. This means that we look at people as products of their motives and understandings instead of simply their front to the world. We may think that someone is rude, short, and irritable. However, this person may actually be very kind and generous but may be dealing with a tragedy, a death in the family, or a sudden financial crisis that is consuming them. This is where Christ would see their underlying motives and not judge them for their actions.

A time when my values was tested happened a few months ago. As a college student, I have very little money. \$100 is a substantial amount to my little family. I work for a financial services company. They needed a new computer but they did not want to spend a lot of money to acquire a new one. I offered to sell them an old computer that I had for \$100. They agreed and I brought the computer to work and set it up for them. The accountant cut me a reimbursement check for \$100 and the matter was settled. A few weeks later, however, the compute began having problems. I was concerned since I was the one who had sold them the computer so I looked into fixing it. The



computer was not worth repairing and a new one would need to be purchased. My dedication and integrity were tested because I knew the computer was not meeting their needs, they needed to buy a new one, and I still had not cashed the \$100 check for the computer. I considered my values and my inner voice and realized that I had not provided the appropriate solution by selling them the computer. Thus, I went to my boss and told him I would take the computer back home and not charge him the \$100. He was happy with not wasting the \$100 on bad equipment.

This was a difficult decision since my family needed the \$100 to continue paying expenses as I finished school. However, I felt that it was the right thing to do according to my values. This was not the most difficult part of the story. A few weeks went by when I was looking through my desk and I found the \$100 check that the company had written me for my computer. I had never cashed it and had left it in the drawer until I knew the computer was the right solution. However, a new computer had already been purchased and I was still holding the \$100 check. The company I work for is a small operation with one financial advisor who owns the place and four support staff members. The owner is so busy and stressed out that he does not have a clear grasp of everything that goes on with his company. He often times forgets many things. I know for a fact that he would never have remembered writing me the \$100 check. He makes over \$400,000 a year so \$100 is no big deal. I could have easily kept the \$100 and no one would have noticed.

I considered keeping it briefly before walking into the owner's office and giving him the check. I told him that even though I had taken the computer back weeks ago, I had forgotten to give him back his check. I gave him the check and he tore it up. He thanked me for my honesty and complimented me for my integrity. In the scheme of things \$100 is not very much. However, I will never change my values for anything. I spent too much of my youth chasing differing values and behaviors that changed with each situation. Now I am dedicated to my values at all costs. It does not matter what will happen because of my decision. When I live my values nothing else matters.

YOUR MENTORS

PROMPT: Who are the people who have mentored you in your leadership development? Which mentors have been most important in your development as a leader? In what ways have they helped you develop? How have you helped your mentor and built a two-way relationship? What more can you bring to your mentoring relationships?

When you are growing up, there are many people that influence your life. Teachers, church leaders, friends, parents, siblings, and relatives all have an effect one way or another. However, the people that have mentored you are the ones that you remember the most. By mentor I mean those who have influenced your outlooks, your goals, and your dreams. Mentors come in two types. Established mentors are people you are supposed to look up to. They are placed in leadership positions to guide you. Examples of established mentors include bishops, mission presidents, and the people you work for. However, it is often the unestablished mentors, those people you don't expect to be influenced by, who can have the most profound effect. My boss Matt has been an established mentor. My friend Captain D has been an unestablished mentor. However, the most powerful mentor to me has been Heavenly Father.

I began working for Matt when I quit a comfortable office job. I needed temporary employment and asked my friend / landlord Matt if I could work for him while I was looking for another job. Matt was a general contractor who specialized in residential remodeling in Salt Lake City. Matt hired me on the spot and I started work the next



day. My temporary position turned into a 4-year “career” with Matt and his company. The 4 year part came as a result of the influence of my most powerful mentor, but more on that later. The funny thing is Matt was influentially opposite what you would normally expect. Matt was very challenging to work for. He had no set schedule and I had no idea what to expect from day to day. I could wake up one day and have the day off. Or, I could be working for the next 12 hours with no break. Matt’s mentoring influence came in how he taught me to be flexible, willing to accept any assignment, and work as hard as I could until the project was complete. This was opposite of most mentor’s structured way of passing along their wisdom. I was able to build a two-way relationship with Matt where I learned to work with his unique management style while I also provided him with valuable feedback regarding our construction projects.

Captain D (my nickname for him) was an unestablished mentor that changed my life. I grew up in a home where college education was never discussed. It was never expected and was not an established priority. I had no one guiding me after high school since my parents had given me little or no direction. I wasted a year after high school by playing around until I left on my mission. After my mission I moved to Salt Lake to live with my brother and work. I went to college for about a year and a half before my brother and I wanted to start a construction business together. As a result, my brother persuaded me not to pursue a college career since we were just going to work for ourselves. I was 25 before I decided it was a horrible idea to work with my brother. I had no degree, I was 25, and I was lost with what to do next.

Captain D was a self-made millionaire (multi-multi-millionaire) and he and I had built a friendship while I was remodeling his house. The remodel was part of my 4 year career with Matt. Captain D went to BYU, started his own construction clean-up business in college with a 1950’s truck, and eventually grew the company until it was one of the largest waste removal corporations in the western United States. Captain D sold the business and retired when he was 35. He got bored and a few months later started a successful concrete-pumping business that services large commercial and residential projects.

I went to see Captain D one day when I was unsure of what to do next with my life. He suggested that I get a college degree. I was reluctant since I was so old and I felt like I had wasted 4 years of my life. Captain D said that it was very important for me and my future family to get a college degree. His influence persuaded me to go back to college. I was able to strike a deal with a private “investor” to pay for my tuition. If I earned a 4.0 GPA, then I owed nothing. Anything less than that and I owed anywhere from half to full of what I borrowed for college within 1 year of graduation. I left Salt Lake with a 4.0 GPA and never had to pay anything back. Captain D was monumental in his mentoring and influence in my life.

The most influential of all mentors has been my Father in Heaven. It is inappropriate for me to discuss the many intense, spiritual, and emotional trials that He has led me through while mentoring / molding me into the person I am today. The most valuable experiences of my life have come from my obedience to His promptings. He has led me from place to place, job to job, school to school, and home to home while He has destroyed my prideful “cottage” in order to build His “castle.” I don’t claim to be a castle, I simply mean that He has made far more of my life than I ever could have on my own.



YOUR SUCCESS

PROMPT: How do you measure success in your life right now? What is your personal scorecard? What are the long-term achievements you would like to realize in your life? What will bring you the greatest amount of happiness in your life? What is the positive impact on other that you would like to have?

Measuring success in life is usually done by way of the size of your bank account. This is how the world around us seems to operate. Focus is placed on wealth and the accumulation thereof. Little more is thought of or deemed important. However, this is not the way in which I measure success in my own life. I measure success based on my own personal scorecard.

Scholastically, I measure success by two methods. First, I measure my success by grades in my class. I work very hard to earn A's in all of my classes. While I have not hit this mark, I have come very close every time. I measure my success in my college degree overall through my cumulative GPA. My cumulative GPA is reflective of my overall success, not just the "in the moment" success of class by class grades. The second measure is by the amount of learning I feel that I have achieved through participation in a class. Anyone can memorize and play "the system" of a class. Many people get away with minimal work by playing the grading system. However, I have committed myself to learning everything I can about the particular subject I am studying. Ironically, I have found that by ignoring the grades and focusing on the learning, I have better grades than if I had just tried for the good grade. How well I implement this system of greatest amount of learning possible is another gauge of my success in school.

Spiritually, I measure success on a few key areas. First, have I read my scriptures this morning? Have I read my scriptures every morning for the last week? How about the last month? If I can answer yes 99% of the time, then I judge my scripture reading a success. Successful church attendance is gauged on a similar system. I also measure spiritual success by how peaceful I feel every day. When I don't feel peaceful, I know what something is off and I need to fix the problem or discuss it with the Lord.

While I could go on and on with lists of how I judge success in different areas of my life, I think that I can sum it all up in one simple phrase. I judge success in my life by how happy I am without external stimulus, how connected I feel with my family, and how peaceful I feel spiritually. Really, for my own person life, nothing else seems to matter. What will bring me the greatest happiness in life is continuing my attitude of simply happiness, spending time with and dedicating time to my family, and continuing my learning / knowledge in the areas of the Gospel and the world around me. Ultimately, my long term goal for happiness is to never stop learning. I have a list of books I want to read after I graduate and have more time. I have a list of topics I would like to study when I am finished school. I would find it most engaging to return to school for more classes upon my retirement from my professional career. Life will hold little flavor when I stop progressing.

YOUR LEADERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

PROMPT: Describe the kinds of leadership relationships you have in your family, church, school, or workplace? What kind of leadership relationship do you and your spouse share? What kind of leadership relationship do you have in church? What kind of leadership relationship do you have in school? What kind of relationship do you have with your boss, peers, or subordinates at work? How could you strengthen any of those relationships?

Leadership relationships are one of the most interesting relationships. In normal relationships, we work, communicate, and deal with one another on a roughly equal level. For example, we don't tend to consider ourselves above our friends or below the butcher at the grocery store. However, when leadership becomes involved, things begin to change. People now look up to you for your advice and counsel and expect you to give



them direction. In the worst cases, people automatically begin to you think that you are bossing them around simply because of your position. Leadership positions can be abused and misused or they can be tools of learning and help. So then the question becomes: what kind of leadership relationships to I have?

The most interesting leadership relationship I have is that of my spouse and I. It has evolved drastically in the two years that I have been married. Originally, I led the way in all things to do with the family. I handled the money and took care of the direction things were going with my career and education. However, over time my wife and I have began to function as one leadership unit instead of me being the leader. My wife now handles paying the bills in order to allow me to focus on school and accomplish my large amounts of homework. In the mornings, my wife is very tired from being up all night with the baby. As such, I get up early with the baby and play with him in order to give my wife an extra hour or two of needed sleep. This symbiotic leadership relationship is very powerful and we both feel like we help the other out. My wife facilitates my homework studies by constantly bringing me food or forcing me to take breaks when it is obvious that I am overwhelmed by what I need to accomplish. My wife and I also sit together and discuss options for my future career. I realize that my future career will have equal if not greater impacts on my wife and children than it will have on me. As such, my wife discuss the options available to us for employment after college.

My leadership relationships in church are of a different sort. Instead of seeking the lead and taking charge, and I simple seek to accomplish whatever is asked of me. In church I tend to act more as a servant than as a leader. I take the assignments that come and go about taking care of them to the best of my ability. I have found that through simple obedience, therein lies the greatest rewards that Church and the Gospel have to offer.

INTEGRATING YOUR LIFE

PROMPT: Think of your life as a house with a bedroom for your personal life, a library for your school life, a den for your church life, an office for your professional life, a family room for your family, and a living room to share with your friends. Can you knock down the walls between these rooms and be the same person in each of them? Are you able to be the same authentic person in each environment, or do you behave differently at work than you do at home, church, with your friends or in the community?

I like the way that our lives are compared to a house with different rooms. It is an excellent analogy that reflects a common attitude and behavior. Often times, the person you get to know at work is not the same person that they are at home, or vice versa. This leads to asking ourselves if we know the “real” person that we work with? Is the person at work the “real” person, or is it the person at home? This can be particularly frustrating when you begin dating someone and you start to discover that they are different around you than when they are by themselves. This is usually a bad sign.

The problem with having multiple “personalities” that adapt to whatever situation you find yourself in, is that your true self is ultimately lost. You don’t know who you are. Your character is not defined and it shifts as easily as wind blows smoke. When popular opinion changes, so do you. The dangerous thing is that I have seen people in the church live with this split personality. People who are strictly devoted to their faith and their standards can be found doing immoral and sinful things outside of church and the company of their families. Somehow in their minds they rationalize this by thinking they are good righteous people. In one personality, certainly they are righteous, but in the other personality they are far from it! This conundrum illustrates the necessity of having one strong central character from which you draw on and consistently emulate no matter what situation you are in. The best example of this character can be found in Jesus Christ.



Personally, I used to be the most extreme “social chameleon.” I used to pride myself on being able to adapt to all the different types of friends I could find at school. My behaviors and attitudes jumped wildly from “room to room” within the “house” of my life. Once I returned from my mission and began to seriously reflect on my personal behavior, I realized that I had to change. I worked very hard to establish my own sense of self-identity. I thought about who I was, what I stood for, and what I believed in. I realized that all of my actions, no matter what room I found myself in, had to be consistent and accurate with my sense of self. Why did I come to this conclusion? Because I found myself miserable, torn, and drawn in different directions without peace in my life nor peace of mind. As soon as I was able to be a consistent person across all rooms of my life and model my character from the Savior, I was able to finally find peace and strength. This played a vital role when I became married. Scared by her mother’s comments about marriage, my fiancée expressed her concern to me that I would be a completely different person once we were married. How grateful I was to be able to tell my fiancée that who I was with her was who she could expect me to be at all times, in all places, and for the rest of my existence.