

The World Needs to See and Feel Your Light

CHAD W. LEWIS

Shortly after accepting my job at BYU, I called Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's office to ask if he would do the voice-over for an athletics commercial during the height of Jimmermania. Because of my football career I had gotten to know Elder Holland, and I thought he would be the perfect person, with his distinctive voice, for the job.

Then I had a meeting with Tom Holmoe, BYU's athletic director, and I let him know how excited I was about the possibility of including Elder Holland in our project. I naively assumed that Tom would be thrilled about my phone call and invitation.

I was wrong. It was a major faux pas. He let me know that any invitation to one of the leaders of the Church needed to go through the president of the school. I quickly wrote an apology to President Samuelson, and this was his inspiring reply:

Chad,

No need to worry. We sometimes forget to inform those coming into BYU employment of the unique way things are done at BYU, particularly when it relates to contacts and requests of the senior Brethren. You are like those guaranteed a place in the celestial kingdom because no one ever

taught them the gospel. We probably should not take this one up the line, but feel free to raise any good ideas you have. Sorry we didn't loop you in earlier. I know Elder Holland's only concern would be disappointing you. Know that you are loved and appreciated. All the best.

Cec

I love that letter. It is a shining example of my topic today: "The World Needs to See and Feel Your Light." What does President Samuelson's letter, with his good-natured correction for me, have to do with this theme? Everything! How do you think it made me feel as a new BYU employee to receive that letter? It inspired me. He didn't crush me with his authority; it was just the opposite. I could feel his light and the love he had for me.

As I share my thoughts with you today, I hope to better prepare you for tomorrow. Many of you will run your own companies. You may hold positions of leadership. You would be wise to follow President Samuelson's great example of how to correct and inspire others.

Chad W. Lewis was associate athletic director at BYU when this devotional address was given on 25 March 2014.

President Samuelson has tried to respond to every email from every student. Think of the encouragement and faith that he has shared with you and other students over the last eleven years. He has certainly followed the counsel of the Savior to let his light shine. He and Sister Samuelson are awesome, and I will miss my association with them. President Kevin Worthen and his wife, Peggy, will likewise win your hearts and earn your respect as they serve you. I know President Worthen and have complete confidence in him.

Our Savior Jesus Christ said, “Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (3 Nephi 12:16). That is my favorite scripture. Let *your* light shine.

When President Thomas S. Monson spoke at BYU in 2011, he titled his remarks “Be a Light to the World.” I love President Monson and know that he is the living prophet today. I support him and sustain him. He is a prophet like Abraham and Moses, like Joseph Smith and Gordon B. Hinckley. In that BYU devotional he shared his testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ:

He is our Savior and our Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father. He is our Exemplar and our strength. He is the light that shineth in darkness. That each of us here today may pledge to follow Him and to be His lights among men and women is my prayer. [BYU devotional address, 1 November 2011]

Let Your Light Shine

The week of my BYU graduation I signed a contract to play football for the Philadelphia Eagles. I wanted to head to the East Coast and let my light shine, make the team, and score a bunch of touchdowns. My emotions swirled together in a mix of total excitement and nervousness.

I arrived at the Eagles facility and was the first player in the tight-end meeting room

waiting for my coach to arrive. A tall man walked by the doorway and saw me out of the corner of his eye. After passing a few steps, he popped back and stood in the doorway, looking at me with a big grin on his face. He had a wad of chewing tobacco in his lower lip. With a twinkle in his eye he said, “Hey, Utah!”

“Yeah?” I responded.

“Are you a Mormon?”

“Yeah, I’m a Mormon.”

“Are you a good Mormon?”

“I don’t know; I try to be.”

“Do you drink?”

“No.”

“Do you smoke?”

“No.”

“Yeah, you’re a good Mormon!”

After that he walked off down the hall.

I had no idea who he was then, but I later learned that he was Emmitt Thomas, the Eagles’ defensive coordinator and legendary defensive back for the Kansas City Chiefs. He knew other Mormons, and he knew the difference between someone who was committed and someone who wasn’t. He was loved by every player he ever coached, and I enjoyed his friendly banter. As you can probably imagine, the locker rooms and the atmosphere of the NFL are not quite like that of a missionary zone conference. And yet in that environment Emmitt Thomas was influenced by some great Latter-day Saints—like Ty Detmer, who was an Eagles quarterback.

There were times that year when negative statements were made about the Church and times when Emmitt thought I might be the target of ridicule for that reason. During my rookie season, whenever Emmitt saw some of that, he would say something like, “Leave him alone. He’s a good guy.” I loved him for that.

The ups and downs of my career sent me to the St. Louis Rams and then back to the Eagles a few years later, when Andy Reid was made the head coach. Emmitt also changed jobs and went to the Minnesota Vikings.

After my fourth season I was selected to play in the Pro Bowl, the NFL all-star game played each year in Hawaii. Emmitt Thomas was on the coaching staff for my team. The first thing I did when I got to the practice field was visit with him personally. I put my hand on his shoulder and told him how much I loved him. He smiled and humorously said, "I love you too, Chad."

I asked him if he knew what I was talking about, and with that same twinkle in his eye he said, "Yeah, I know what you're talking about." His impact on me left a lasting impression.

In 2008 Emmitt was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. I cried when I heard his acceptance speech because it brought back a flood of memories of how he let his light shine on me. These are the final lines of his speech:

As I go to my seat I'd like to leave you with these final thoughts. Our talent is God's gift to us. How we use that talent is our gift to him. My sincere hope and prayer is that God finds my gift back to him a worthy one. May God bless you, keep you and continue the good fight of faith. [Emmitt Thomas' enshrinement speech, Pro Football Hall of Fame Field at Fawcett Stadium, 2 August 2008, profootballhof.com/hof/member.aspx?PlayerId=270&tab=Speech]

President Monson has counseled us to go to the rescue of those in need. He said:

*Amidst the storms of life, danger lurks; and men, like boats, find themselves stranded and facing destruction. Who will man the lifeboats, leaving behind the comforts of home and family, and go to the rescue? ["To the Rescue," *Ensign*, May 2001, 48]*

Surely we try our best to do that as missionaries and in our service one to another. When I was on the practice field I was grateful that Emmitt Thomas spoke up on my behalf and, in his own way, shared his gift and came to my rescue. He could have easily remained silent.

I will always love him for that act of Christian kindness.

I went to Philly with a deep desire to let my light shine, and what I found is that the bright sunshine of others is brilliant! I knew that as members of the Lord's Church we hadn't cornered the market on goodness, and what I found was that goodness in others was exactly the light I needed. I knew the NFL would have some rough characters, because I followed the game and I watched the news, but I was filled with hope when I got to know how many great people there are.

The people you work with and associate with out in the world will be drawn to you because of your desire to be like the Savior. Let your love for Him shine from your eyes. Let there be no doubt that He is who you follow. You have an understanding of the Atonement of Jesus Christ that the world needs to see and feel. The Book of Mormon is what teaches and clarifies the Atonement in a way that changes our hearts so that we can be born again.

Concerning the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith said:

I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book. [Book of Mormon introduction; also HC 4:461]

Surround Yourself with Greatness

Another person whose light greatly influenced my life was Jeff Thomason, my teammate and fellow tight end with the Eagles. The whole team loved Jeff because he earned their respect through hard work. He had a magnetic personality that made all of us want to be around him.

Jeff took his job seriously and was a professional in every way. He could handle mistakes on the field and keep his chin up better than anyone else I knew. A great example of this happened during a play at training camp.

Jeff ran “22 Texas Y Out,” which required a ten-yard vertical sprint with a sharp cut to the outside. He ran a nice route, and Donovan McNabb threw a sweet pass. When Jeff reached for the ball, it jammed his left pinky finger, which caused him to drop the ball and also resulted in a boutonniere deformity. That’s when the pinky remains bent down; it’s fairly common among football players.

Andy Reid blew up. He yelled that Jeff had just run the worst route he had ever seen. It was not typical of Andy to do that. Jeff smiled through the pain and even laughed behind his face mask as he held his finger. He knew Andy really liked him, and he didn’t lose confidence over Andy’s outburst.

Jeff’s reaction caused me and the other tight end, Mike Bartrum, to crack up. Even though Andy was on fire, it was a humorous scene. We were exhausted from training camp, and anything funny was made funnier by the sheer physical and mental exhaustion we were experiencing. Jeff’s ability to smile and laugh in times of trial and even pain lifted the spirits of those around him.

His attitude reminds me of Ammon taking on the Lamanites who scattered the flocks at the waters of Sebus. When the other servants with Ammon wept and murmured because of their dire situation, Ammon let his confident and faithful light shine:

Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy; for, said he, I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants, or the power which is in me, in restoring these flocks unto the king, that I may win the hearts of these my fellow-servants, that I may lead them to believe in my words. [Alma 17:29]

My weakness as a player was in blocking. Jeff not only helped me improve my physical technique by showing me how to do it but also always encouraged me to get better. Even in the highly competitive culture of the NFL he

took the time and made the effort to help his teammates.

When Michele and I would go out to dinner with Jeff and his wife, Blake, Jeff would ask me to share stories of my mission in Taiwan. He said he loved hearing those stories. We gave them a copy of *The Other Side of Heaven*, the movie about Elder John H. Groberg’s mission in Tonga, and he loved it. After watching it he said, “I wish I could have played at BYU and gone on a mission to Tonga!”

We gave the Thomasons a leather-bound copy of the Book of Mormon with our testimonies written to them inside the cover. Since we loved them, we wanted to share what meant most to us and what brought us peace and joy.

People will love to hear your stories. Don’t be afraid to reach out and share them. Your stories did not just happen for you; they are meant to be shared. Sharing them is a great way for you to let your light shine for others.

Jeff finished his career and went to work for a national construction company. Two years later, when the Eagles played the Atlanta Falcons in the National Football Conference Championship Game, I broke my foot at the very end of the game, which made it impossible for me to play in the Super Bowl.

Andy called Jeff and signed him out of retirement to play in the world’s biggest football game! The next two weeks were a media circus for Jeff. His story of going from construction worker to the Super Bowl was a big hit. He was on *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, CBS’s *The Early Show*, and a *60 Minutes* special. He handled it all with class and humility.

The Eagles did not win Super Bowl XXXIX against the New England Patriots, but Jeff played a great game. It marked the end of our football careers together. The game is over, but we will be friends forever.

The light of friendship I felt from Jeff in challenging situations was illuminating—like a car driving at night with the headlights on

high beam! I saw how important it was to be around someone who could maintain a positive outlook no matter the situation of the game, if there was a setback, or anything else. I learned it was vital to surround myself with greatness, and I invite you to do the same.

As you study here at BYU and then as you go out into the world, find people who will build you up and help you live your high standards. Surround yourself with people who will support your faith and not belittle you for seeking protection through your covenants with Heavenly Father.

The Power of Light, Love, and Friendship

It was a true gift to play in the NFL for a coach who shared my faith. Andy Reid came to BYU as a junior college transfer offensive lineman. He was part of the team that won the 1980 “Miracle Bowl” in which Jim McMahon threw the last-second, forty-one-yard bomb that was caught by Clay Brown to beat SMU. Andy was planning to go into the medical field and become a doctor like his mom, but LaVell Edwards saw something in Andy and told him that he would make a great head coach.

When he came to Provo, Andy was not a member of the Church. At BYU he met a girl named Tammy who changed his life. As they started to fall in love, she let him know that she wanted to be married in the temple. Andy wondered what the temple was all about. He loved Tammy enough to find out. Because she was willing to share her faith with him, he studied the gospel, embraced the teachings of the Restoration, and joined the Church. They were married in the temple, and they raised their five kids in the light of the gospel.

Andy’s whole career has been defined by hard work, dedication, and treating others with the utmost respect. Like LaVell, Andy made no distinction between the quarterback, the janitor, the tight end, or the secretaries. He lifted the entire organization. He made sure the workplace was professional and clean, with

no evidence of pornography. I thought I was the luckiest football player on earth to have been coached by LaVell in college and Andy in the pros.

For example, Andy did not allow bad movies to be played on the plane or the bus when we traveled. That was different from how many other teams operated. I even took some gentle ribbing from my teammates, who would ask, “What are we going to watch this week? *Bambi?*”

I told them, “If you’re lucky!”

After 9/11 Andy spoke to our team about grief and love. It was powerful. The next day he pulled me aside and mentioned how much he enjoyed watching me and my teammates quote Bruce R. McConkie on the news when we didn’t even know it. I asked him what he was talking about. He said, “Yeah, grief and love—I found an old conference report and plagiarized the whole thing!” It was no accident that when he left Philadelphia to become the Kansas City Chiefs’ head coach that he hired Emmitt Thomas as his defensive back coach. Birds of a feather flock together.

When Michele and I finally left Philadelphia to move back to Utah, we were sad to say good-bye to friends who had made an eternal impact on our lives. Our bishop was Vai Sikahema, who had played football at BYU and also for the Philadelphia Eagles. He worked for NBC 10 News in Philly as the sports anchor.

When Michele and I had arrived in Philly, Vai and his wife, Keala, had immediately welcomed us into their family and their home. Through the years I think we ate as many meals at their house as we did at our own. Those meals often included missionaries and people who were investigating the Church. The Sikahemas demonstrated how to create a home in which the light of the Savior could be seen and felt through their love and friendship with others.

Since Vai was in the media and chose which interviews would make the news, he

unwittingly let me share my testimony with my Chinese brothers and sisters. One day I started my interview by saying, “Syandzai, Kana, Yijyan chimyau de shrgung, Jyou yau chusyan yu ren jr ernyu de jungjyan!” I proceeded to quote the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants in Chinese. My mission president, Kent Watson, had all of the missionaries memorize and recite that section at each zone conference.

Michele called me as I drove home from work and asked what I had been saying in Chinese, because it had just aired on the news. I laughed and thought it was pretty cool for the Chinese people who lived in Philly to hear in their own language that “a marvelous work [was] about to come forth among the children of men” (D&C 4:1).

On our last day in Philly we sat in Vai’s home while his son LJ played the guitar and sang to our family my favorite Hawaiian song, “Kanaka Vai Vai.” I was overcome as I thought about the light and the love that the Sihakemas had let shine on our family for so many years. I learned from my good bishop that the Lord’s servants are color-blind, that they love all of God’s children. Vai made me feel like his Tongan brother.

While you are here at BYU please get to know your bishops. Help them remember your names by attending your meetings. Wherever you go after BYU, make sure you stay active and remain true to your testimony. Your bishop will help you feel the love of the Savior and better understand His Atonement.

A month after we left Philly, my best friend growing up, Bryan, moved into Vai’s ward. He was not active in the Church and had quite a few challenges. He called me in distress, looking for help. When I called Vai to ask for his help, he responded by saying that I had called the right person. He said he would do everything in his power to help Bryan. He promised to be relentless and to go all the way to the end in lending a hand. He committed

to use all of his connections, resources, and friendships to help; he committed to pull out all the stops.

A wave of gratitude washed over me. I knew Bryan was in the exact hands the Lord wanted him to be in. I thought of the Savior’s parable of the good Samaritan:

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. [Luke 10:33–35]

Vai did exactly that. He bound up Bryan’s wounds and took him into his home the same way he had done for my family. He helped Bryan regain his footing in life and find his testimony in the Savior again. Over the next few years my friend met a girl named Temecia, and he helped her study the gospel with the missionaries. She got baptized and they got married. I was there and so was Vai when they were sealed in the Manhattan New York Temple. It was a miracle!

Help Others See and Feel the Light of the Savior

Presently my job and my passion is to develop the BYU Athletic Department. I get to work with some of the finest people I know. What a joy it is to work with the student athletes! Tom Holmoe calls them “the secret sauce,” and he inspires us to do whatever we can to serve them and to help them. Who would eat a J Dawg without the secret sauce? And who would work here without trying as hard as possible to help the students succeed?

Taysom Hill is one of the 630 student athletes at BYU. He strives to let his light shine as he performs with energy and class. Jeff Simmons, Taysom's mission president, just told me that Taysom was one of the best missionaries Australia has ever seen. He couldn't stop describing the many ways Taysom let his light shine as a missionary. One telling comment he made was that he noticed Taysom's light long before he witnessed his athletic ability.

If I had time I would share many more examples of student athletes and generous supporters of BYU who give of their resources because they love you and want the best for you.

I am very grateful that I was fortunate enough to attend BYU. I love the professors and coaches who shared their lives and their light with me. As you apply the lessons and principles you learn here at BYU, I hope that you will find success. Be willing to share that success with others. Be willing to give back and to let your light shine so that the people around you will see and feel the light of the Savior.

I want you to know that I love my family with all of my heart. My parents and Michele's parents are the best people I know. Michele

has been my constant support and my best friend. Marrying her is the best decision I ever made. She is the absolute love of my life. My children are my sweetest gifts. I love each one of them. I want them to know that they need to look to Christ for peace, joy, and a remission of their sins.

At age nineteen I was called as a missionary to the Chinese people in Taiwan. They are pioneers who have more courage than I could comprehend. I saw in their faces the divine kindness of the Savior. I promised them, and I promise you, that when you read the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, and pray to your Father in Heaven, you will feel His love for you. I know that teaching about and being cleansed by the Atonement is the greatest motivator in life. Jesus Christ suffered and died for you and for me. I know when I demonstrate my faith and repent of my sins that I feel close to Him. I know He is my Redeemer because I have felt His light and His love. He is who I believe in with my whole heart. I know that His arms of mercy are opened wide and that He is the way to have peace and joy with my family forever.

Let us do our best to help people see and feel His light. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.