

Having a Testimony in the Workplace

by
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LDS Business College Devotional
February 1, 2006

It sure is an honor for me to be here, and I didn't expect that opening prayer. That was awesome. It's been a while since I've heard a Chinese prayer, and it just sounds so good. I know you guys didn't understand it, but you could feel what she was saying, and I could understand it. One of my mission companions, Elder Andy Hogan, showed up today, and it is a special bond that we had as Taiwan Taichung missionaries. It's great to see him. And all of the things he's gone through, and the great things he's done in his life. My cousin, Kevin Cromore back there, he's one of the Book of Mormon teachers here, what a great guy. He served his mission in Hong Kong. So he's eaten his fair share of rice and pai gu fan and everything. He knows what all the rest of you guys are missing.

I was asked to share some remarks today, and what I want to talk about is having a testimony in the workplace. I'm going to share some stories of being in the NFL and I hope you like them. If you don't, I hope you can learn from them. If neither, then I don't know what to tell you. But I'm so grateful to be here. I met Vivian this morning, for the first time. She's from Chile, and she was a secretary to Elder Wells in the Chilean temple. She's with my friend Del Tingey, who runs the American Indian Services who I do a lot of work with. Vivian could tell you he's one of the greatest people in the world. There are so many great people in this world, Mormons, non-Mormons. There are just great people. And it's so important for us to associate with those good people and good things—surround ourselves with greatness. Be around the best, and leave the stuff that isn't the best.

One of the things I wanted to talk about is the NFL's interest in using me to help be an ambassador for the league in China. They first asked me if I wanted to take a trip to Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, and they were going to pay me to do it. Are you kidding me? To go back to my mission, and to see people that I love? And you're going to pay me to do it? Where do I sign? Let's go.

It was such a great opportunity. The Church gave my wife and me the clearance to do a fireside in each of the cities and countries where we visited. The city that was my favorite was Taichung, where I served. I was up there saying how much I love all these areas, and this one area in particular was Fong Yuan, and I was saying what a great place it was, how much I learned and loved the people. At the end I turned it over to questions and answers. This woman in the back stood up, and she said, "You keep talking about Fong Yuan and how much you loved it. I was there, but I don't remember you."

And I said, “Well, I remember you. Your name is Sister Woo, and your husband was the branch president when I was there. And you had a one-year-old baby boy and you had me over to dinner, and I’ll never forget that.”

And she was like, wow. And afterwards I showed her my pictures, and she said, “Man, you’ve become so fat! I can’t believe it!” When I was there, if I turned sideways, you couldn’t even see me. I was so skinny. I was a stick. But I loved the chance that I had to be an ambassador for the League, to go to Taiwan, to go to Singapore, to go to Thailand. And then this last year I went to China twice, and what a great experience that was.

Before I went to China two years ago, the NFL asked me to do the Chinese broadcast of the Super Bowl. So here we were, the third year in a row, we went to the NFC championship game as the Eagles, we lost the game to the Panthers. The next morning they called me up and they said, “Would you like to do the Chinese broadcast?”

And I said, “Yeah, let’s do it! I’d love to.” I figured I’d be a sideline reporter that they’d cut to every once in a while and I could say something smart or whatever. But they said, “We’d like you to do the color commentary.”

“The whole game?” I said.

They said, “Yeah.”

And I said, “Well, I’ve never done a game in English, let alone the Super Bowl in Chinese. But I’ll do it.” I was really nervous for the first couple of days, and then after that I thought, “What do I have to lose? I don’t know any football jargon. I don’t know how to say “quarterback” in Chinese. (I do now: Si feng wei) And I didn’t know how to say “tight end.” Tight end is “man on the scrimmage catch ball” [Qiang ce bian feng] Jingoshongjesso) So I had to learn all that stuff. And I just got to thinking, you know what? The only Chinese I really know is missionary Chinese. So I’m going to let CCTV have it. I’m going to give them the first, the second, the third discussion. If they don’t like it, they can kick me out of there. So I had a blast.

During the telecast, my partner was saying how amazing it was that I had four kids, and it was just, “Wow! Can you believe this? This guy has *four* kids!” And I said “Renhe chenggong wufa daiti jiating de shibai,” which means, “There’s no success in the world that can compensate for failure in the home.” And all the producers were saying “Oh, very good! Very good!”

So the whole broadcast was like that. I had so much fun. You asked me about Tom Brady earlier. We have the same agent, and hes a great guy. And here he was, down on the field throwing, and what can I say but, “Hey, I know that Tom Brady throws true passes.” And that was my language. It was so fun for me.

And when I went over in May, I met the president of Reebok. The president of Reebok in China’s name is Willy Young. He’s a great guy. He grew up in Taiwan. His dad was

a part of the Chiang Kai-Shek army that left China and went to Taiwan. And then his mom joined the Church. Two missionaries knocked on her door. She was a famous surgeon in Taipei. She joined the Church. Their family, because of government persecution relating to his father and grandfather, moved to Argentina. When he got to Argentina, two more missionaries contacted them and found them and kept teaching them, and he was like, "Wow, this is amazing. Everywhere I go I can't get away from these Mormon missionaries." He is a Christian guy who is unbelievable. I loved meeting him. My wife, at the time, was pregnant and so she didn't go on the trip with me. So I asked my missionary companion, Rob Lamb, to come with me. So here Willy Young is, telling me, "Man, I just can't get away from these Mormon missionaries."

I said, "Willy, you came all the way back to China and you still can't get away from the Mormon missionaries. Rob Lamb was my missionary companion in Taiwan." We had such a great time talking and sharing experiences with him, and he with us. And he said his favorite music was the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. So we went ahead and sent him a whole bunch of CDs. What a great guy. I look forward to doing more business with him in the future.

One of the things I've learned playing in the NFL is to pray without ceasing. I never really understood what that meant. When Andy Reid became the head coach of the Philadelphia Eagles—Andy's a Mormon, a great person, and a person that I really love—he gave me the opportunity to fight for the starting tight end job. We were about halfway through training camp, and I was so tired. Training camp is brutal. It is so brutal. I wish I could explain how brutal. But just take it from me, it was brutal. I remember going to sleep one night, and the next morning we had a live scrimmage which was pivotal for me, because it would determine if I was going to be the starting tight end or not. And as I was trying to go to sleep, I was so tired that I couldn't sleep. My mind was tired, and my body was tired, and I remember I just started praying.

And I prayed all through the night. I prayed that I would have my energy renewed so that in the morning, I could go out and do it. And I went out and did it. I had a great scrimmage, and it was a powerful example to me of prayer. From then on, I had several experiences of being too tired at night, where I couldn't do anything. And instead of watching TV, I've prayed. And during football games I've prayed. I've learned what a powerful tool it is to be in constant communication with our Heavenly Father, to pray without ceasing. I love that. When I see that in the scriptures, I think of that.

My heroes are the 2,000 stripling warriors. They've given me so much courage and example and testimony as I've been playing football. I've read their story a billion times. Okay, I won't exaggerate—two billion. And I love reading it again. There's something I want to share with you. I brought my cleat from this year. I wear one cleat for each game. Don't we waste a lot of shoes? This is my cleat, and on the inside of every left cleat I wear, I write—right here on the "swoosh," I write "Firm" and "undaunted," and then the initials of my wife and all my kids. Why would I write those funny words? Marty Morningweg, the offensive coordinator for the Eagles, was in practice this year. I had written "Firm" on the top in a black pen that shines when it hits the sun. We were at

practice about a month and a half ago, and the sun caught my cleat and up jumped this word “Firm” and on the other shoe I had written “undaunted.” And Marty saw them and asked “Firm? Undaunted? What’s wrong with you?”

And I said, “There is a powerful story in the scriptures about people who are just great.” And I wanted to tell him everything, but we were at practice and we had to go to another drill. But the reason that I write “firm” and “undaunted” on my shoes is because of the story of the 2,000 stripling warriors. Here’s a bunch of guys that had never fought, but they were asked to defend their people. And so they went into battle. And I want to read some great things about that. It says in Alma 57:18 that as the armies were about to overpower the Nephites, In verse 19, “But behold, my little band of two thousand and sixty fought most desperately; yea, they were firm before the Lamanites.” And then in verse 20, it says, “And as the remainder of our army were about to give away”—so right when things were the worst, right when you were preparing to get an F in your religion class, or whatever bad thing could be happening to you, right when they were ready to fall before the Lamanites—“Behold, those two thousand and sixty were firm and undaunted. Yea, and they did observe to obey every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them....”

I thought that was so powerful that I wrote that on every cleat, so that after every series when I would go and sit by Donald McNabb on the sidelines and think about what we needed to do to change and to win, whether things were going good or things were going bad, I would look down and I would be reminded of my heroes. And that’s how I incorporated these guys into my workplace. It gave me strength. It gave me courage.

I wasn’t always the greatest player. I made mistakes. But I can testify that reading their story and thinking about the Book of Mormon, thinking about these 2,000 guys that lived a long time ago, gave me so much power and strength.

Last year, during the NFC championship game, one of the last plays of the game I caught a touchdown pass to put us into the Super Bowl. And it was a feeling—just one in a million. It was sweet! But at the same time that I caught this ball, I twisted and tore the Lis Franc ligament in my foot. And that totally dislocated my whole foot. The arch, my foot was just obliterated. When I got back to the sideline, I took off my shoe, took off my sock and I grabbed my big toe and it just fell right away from the rest of my foot, and Im thing, “This ain’t supposed to be happening.” I wasn’t able to play in the Super Bowl last year. And because of that I wasn’t signed back to the Eagles. I had ten months that I spent rehabbing and working and trying to get my foot to work again. The Lis Franc injury is a wicked injury. Finally, the Eagles, through this year, kept calling and saying, “Are you ready? Are you ready?”

I’d say, “I can’t play. I’m not ready.” And finally they called in November, and my wife and I said, “It’s time. I’m ready. Let’s go.” I’d been given blessings, but I was still very nervous because up until this point I had not run full speed one time. This was ten months. And I was nervous to go back and play an NFL game. Because if you can’t run

full speed, you're going to get your head knocked off. It's a wicked game. And so I was nervous.

I got on that plane five hours after their telephone call. I took the scriptures and *The Other Side of Heaven* book from Elder Groberg, which is one of my favorites, and I just read those, over and over. I took a letter from a missionary friend of mine, Andrew Geddes, who broke his neck when he was sixteen years old, and was totally paralyzed for a couple of months. He regained the use of his legs, he regained most of the use of his arms. He can't really use his hands—and he was called on a mission. And he was hoping that he would go to a warm weather climate because his body works a little bit better when it's warm. And he was hoping he would be in a car, because obviously he couldn't ride a bike. And where did he get called to serve? Barry Sanders' home town, Detroit, Michigan, home of this year's Super Bowl. So instead of grumbling about going to a cold weather place, and grumbling that he was going to have to ride a bike for two years, instead of murmuring and grumbling, he went out and borrowed his little brother's bike and he practiced riding his bike around our neighborhood. He said he crashed a whole bunch of times. But before he left, he was able to drive down the street without crashing into a parked car. It was awesome, just seeing his testimony in action. He was moving forward.

I'm going to come back to what I was saying about my Lis Franc in a minute. This week the NFL asked me to be in an international press conference with Paul Taglibu on Friday before the Super Bowl, where I'm going to discuss the efforts they're making in China, and then on Saturday, guess who I get to go do splits with? Andrew Geddes in Trenton, Michigan. And his mission president gave us approval, and his blessing for us to do that. So I can't wait to do that.

So I had his letter, where he explains how he learned to tie a tie. It took him thirty minutes. He went on his mission with a bunch of those zipper ties. But he said, "Man, these zipper ties, they look corny. They're not as cool as everyone else's ties." So he learned how to tie a tie with his hands that hardly even work. At first, it took him thirty minutes, and he said now it takes less than five minutes, to tie a tie. What a great example he's been to me. And that's why I had his letter.

So I'm sitting on this plane heading back to Philadelphia, and I'm thinking about Andrew Geddes overcoming insurmountable odds. I'm thinking about these 2,000 stripling warriors and other stories in the scriptures, and I'm reading the book *The Other Side of Heaven*. And it was a powerful flight. In one ear, I had a voice speaking to me that I couldn't play, that reality said I couldn't run full speed, I couldn't do it. And in the other ear I had inspiration, that I could do it, and that if I had faith, I would do it. And in Kolipoki's book, he talks about listening to the right voice. And so I had to concentrate my mind as hard as I could to drown out that other voice with the good voice. I practiced that, the whole flight. And it was challenging. I focused on the words of blessings that had been given to me to return to health. It was amazing.

One of those scriptures that really struck me was in Alma 37, and I'd like to share that with you. Alma is talking to his sons, and this is one of the things that he said. He was talking about the Liahona, and how that compass would work. He said, "And it did work for them," (in verse 40), "according to their faith in God; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way that they should go, behold, it was done; therefore they had this miracle, and also many other miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day."

When I read that, the words "those spindles" jumped out at me like "Your foot." And it was real. And I just believed that if I put my faith in God—I had done so much work in rehab, it was the hardest thing I've ever done, this last ten months, to get my foot ready to go—so I had done work. I had prepared as hard as I could. I still wasn't there yet, and there was a gap that I just couldn't make up. I didn't have enough time. But here I was on the plane, and I had a workout at eight o'clock the next morning. I knew that if I had faith in Christ, He could cause my foot to work. And so I prayed that when I had the workout the next morning, that my foot would work. And when I went the next morning, I had a workout, and what happened? It worked! It was amazing. It wasn't amazing; it was a miracle. And I ran and the coaches were like, "Wow! You tore your Lis Franc ten months ago? You look great! You're signed." And I was like, "Okay. Game on!"

Now, what happened when I went to practice the next morning? My foot hurt like crazy. Man, was I tested. And as I walked in, I just thought, "I had a miracle yesterday, and I'm not about ready to let that miracle just go up in smoke. I've got to continue to apply my faith to my foot." And I did. And it would loosen up during the day and I'd be able to practice. And at night time, my wife wasn't quite to Philadelphia yet, she was still out here with the kids. She came out a week and a half later. We were trying to read the Book of Mormon. So we would turn the phone on speaker phone and we would read chapters at night, so we didn't miss it. And we made our goal of reading the Book of Mormon this year. It was awesome.

This year, overcoming that foot injury, getting back to the Eagles—even though we lost all the games once I got back there, and I'm sorry, I wanted to go to the Super Bowl—that was a more important year of my career by a hundred times than going to the Super Bowl last year. I mean, that was sweet last year—winning all the games, going to the Super Bowl. But this year, I learned more about faith than I've learned in a long time. And that's why it was so important to me.

Now, some of you are in business where you are going to represent other people. I have an agent. He happens to be the only Asian agent in all of football. His name is Don Edy. He's from California; his parents were from Quonjo. And he has done a great job of representing me, of steering me in the right way. Well, some of you will become salesmen, some of you might become attorneys, some of you might even become agents. And I'm pleading with you to lead us, football players and other people—lead us in the right way. Don't lead us off a cliff. We need you to use your brains and your heart and your conscience to give us the best direction we can have. Every year, you're going to see examples of TV of agents who are leading their clients off a cliff. I don't need that

from you. I need your help. I need your brains. I need your morality. I need your testimony, to steer me in the right direction, to get me involved in the right programs, to be honest with me. And that's what you're getting ready to enter. You're getting ready to enter this work force. The world needs you, and the world needs the skills and the lessons you're learning right here at the LDS Business College. And it is important. And I need you.

You're going to get persecuted and you're going to get praised, for being a Mormon in the world. I've had my share of both. People are so complimentary that I'm a Mormon, that I served a mission, that we have strong family values. But on the other side, there have been people who persecuted me, and that's kind of been hard, especially when it comes from my teammates. One teammate kept bugging me about polygamy. And I finally told him, "I'll be more than happy to talk to you any time you want to at my house. We can sit down every night of the week, have dinner, you can ask me any question you want. But while we're at work, can we just keep to football?"

He was so frustrated. He had all these questions for me and all these guys gathered around behind me, like, "What's he going to say? Ooh."

That was how I could handle some of the persecution I got at work. "Hey, let's focus on the goal we have to be world champs. And if you want to come to my house later, I'll talk all night long about what I believe in, and the tenets of our faith." So that helped me, that phrase. And if they were willing to talk about religion, I'd talk about it. If they had real questions, I'd answer them. But if it was a persecution-type question, I didn't have time for that.

The very first person I met in Philadelphia when I went there from BYU was my defensive coordinator Emmett Thomas, who's a guy I love. Emmett Thomas was the defensive coordinator for the Eagles. I didn't know who he was. I was sitting in the tight end meeting room before everyone else got there, and Emmett Thomas came walking by. He had a big wad of chewing tobacco in his lower lip like he always does, and he looked in and he saw me, and he said, "Hey, Utah."

And I said, "Yeah."

And he said, "You a Marmon?"

And I said, "Yeah, I'm a Marmon."

He said, "You a good Marmon?"

I said, "I don't know; I try to be."

He said, "Do you smoke?"

I said, "No."

He said, “Do you drink?”

I said, “No.”

He said, “Yeah, you good Marmon,” and he walked off.

And I was like, “Who did I just talk to? Who was that guy?” And it turned out to be the defensive coordinator, a really important guy on our team.

There was another person on the staff that didn’t think Mormons were cool. And he told me straight out, he said, “I hate you Mormons. I think it’s a joke. I had a friend that lived in Salt Lake City, and the neighbors wouldn’t let him play with his kids, and stuff like that.”

And I said, “Look, I’ll be willing to talk to you anytime you want about it, answer any questions you have.”

During that year, Emmett Thomas, the guy that asked if I was a Mormon, came to my defense on the practice field several times when I didn’t feel like I was getting the best treatment. Emmett Thomas always said, “Hey, you be nice to that guy. He’s a good guy.” Well, why did he say that? He said that because he had met other Mormons. He had met Steve Young, and he’d met Ty Detmer, and guys that had given him a great example. And I was so grateful for those people that went ahead and gave a great example like that.

I’ve enjoyed playing in the NFL. It’s been a great platform. It’s been a great job. People ask me what’s the worst part about it. Number one, no question, is working on Sunday. I’ve never gotten used to that. It’s brutal. I don’t feel I can keep that commandment when I’m playing on the field. And I miss out on the blessings of being with my family, in my ward, sitting in Church, singing the songs of the Restoration, singing the hymns, and partaking of that spirit. I miss out on that for six months. The bishop in my ward has given us permission, the other Mormons on the team, to have Sacrament on Tuesday at my house, and that’s been great. But I still miss out on Sunday. So there are gives and takes.

Those are some of the stories I wanted to share about having a testimony in the workplace. I want to testify that I know that this Church is true. I’m so grateful for that. I’m grateful that I was a missionary in Taiwan, and I got to meet great people like Andy Hogan. I’m grateful that I can speak the Chinese language so that I can share my love now with the people of China. I think it’s so important for us to create friendships with China instead of preparing to go to war against them. And I’m going to use sports, which usually flies under the radar of everything else, because everyone can connect with sports. It’s fun. I want to use that to develop friendships and to spread good will as much as I can, with those people. But more important than all that is that I know Christ

lives, that He loves me. And I'm grateful for the Atonement, because I need it. And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

We have a couple of minutes, and I'd love to answer any questions.

Q: Have you met national dignitaries from China, and have you had any missionary-type gospel experiences with them yet?

A: Yeah, I've met the mayor of Beijing. I had dinner with the president, Hu Jintao of China. I've met so many big corporate people, business people over there. When I go with Commissioner Taglibu, it's the red carpet. I mean, we meet the "Who's Who" of China. And I just want to do my part to let them know who I am and what I stand for. One of the best parts of going to China for me is that I went to the Forbidden City. The Forbidden City is where the emperor used to live. It's right where Tiananmen Square is. It's like Washington, D.C. for China, in Beijing. There's a park just outside the Forbidden City where in 1921, David O. McKay dedicated the land of China to the preaching of the gospel. And it's marked. Steve Toronto, who is now the district president in China, did research to find out the exact location of his blessing, and they put a little marker at the spot. And to go into this beautiful, quiet park and walk and see where that happened—you can't walk there and not just feel the testimony of what happened there in 1921. So that's one of my favorite places there in China.

Q: Could you name a couple of people, players or coaches in the NFL, that you most respect?

A: James Thrash was my teammate. He was a wide receiver. He plays with the Redskins now. He's a guy that I have total respect for. He's an honest guy. He has integrity in everything that he does. When he goes to work, he works as hard as a pack mule. The guy is amazing. So he's one.

Germaine Mayberry is another. He's a guy from Texas. He was a first-round draft pick for the Eagles the year before I got there, and he was partially blind in one of his eyes. They had him play right tackle. He was horrible at right tackle. Right tackle is one of the big guys on the offensive line that blocks for the quarterback. Well, he couldn't do a good job because he was partially blind in that eye, and he couldn't see that well. Once Andy Reid was named coach, he moved Germaine down to guard, which is right next to the center. Germaine is a big dude; he's as strong as a country store. So he'd just get down and block. He became a Pro Bowl player, but what I liked most about Germaine is, when he signed with the Eagles, he gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars by setting up an eye clinic. It was called the Eye Mobile. They bought an RV, they put his face on it, and other Eagles' faces, and they went around to all the inner city schools in Philadelphia, and gave free eye clinics and eye exams, and gave free glasses to kids that couldn't afford it. He did that his whole career, nine years in Philadelphia. He's a quiet guy. He's humble. Those are two guys that I love.

Q: Why did you decide to go into football?

A: That's a good question, and I'll tell you. My companion, another companion in Taiwan, Larry Harmer, had a scholarship to play at BYU. He was an All-American at Olympus High School. It's hard to be a high school All-American in the state of Utah. And he was one of them, a defensive lineman. And the whole time we were in Taiwan he was saying, "You've got to come play football with me." And I said, "But I don't have a scholarship. It would be impossible." When we got home, he started spring ball, and he just kept encouraging me. But I wasn't doing anything about it. Finally he got real angry with me and he said, "Look, I know you can play. But now it's time for you. You need to go and pray about it, and if the Lord tells you don't play, I'll never bring it up again." And so for two weeks, I prayed about it. And I got my answer two weeks later. I was lying in bed and I just felt—I can't explain it. I just knew that that was for me. I had to play. So I played. I was given a scholarship. Everything happened.

Larry? What happened to Larry? He hurt his knee, he hurt his elbow, he hurt his shoulder. He had to stop playing football early. But don't cry for him, because he went to Organizational Behavior School at BYU. He got the best job out of BYU—Nortel Networks. He went to Price Waterhouse Consulting. He started his own company in Texas. They were bought by a company in Minnesota. Now he's the president and CEO of Polaroid. It's a billion dollar company. He's thirty-four years old. He's employed half our mission over there in China. So he's doing just great. He's got a strong testimony, and that's the reason why I play football, because of Larry Harmer.

Thank you so much for letting me come. It's great to be with you.