

Examples matter, and someone is always going to follow yours

Sam Harley
April 12, 2026



I have always been good at explaining things. When I joined, the lectures I heard on Divine Principle struck me the way nothing ever had. I'd read Buddhist sutras, LaoTsu's "Tao Te Ching", and been struck by the truth that flowed in them. I got a strong impulse to read the Bible one day in my teens, picked up the family bible, and opened it at random. I read the story of Tamar, and how she seduced her father-in-law. What the hell?? I shut the bible and didn't touch it again for many years.

But the Divine Principle explained things clearly, how the world is made of reciprocating masculinity and femininity, of internal nature and external form, by a being that has those characteristics. I was amazed at how clear things became, but then they'd get even clearer. It was like looking through a microscope for the first time, and being amazed. Then the focus got clearer, wow! And clearer, wow!!

I was ecstatic. And being an Aquarius, a water-bearer, I wanted to carry this water to people. I could explain, find words. I was on my way to becoming a lecturer, for sure. I thought.

Except my heart hadn't absorbed the Divine Principle. I could explain how the purpose of life was joy, but part of me just couldn't get that. And while God certainly loved everybody, it was hard to believe that God just loved me. Just loved. If I screwed something up, I couldn't believe God could forgive me when I couldn't forgive myself.

I could explain this great new truth, but I didn't know how to live it. My mind believed it, my heart was still suspicious of people and life in general. I wanted to talk to people from a great height, not next to them or supporting them from below.

As a vegetarian, empath and introvert, and aloof person in general, I was way too ungrounded and sensitive to people's energy on the streets of San Francisco or Berkely to go out and witness. And I wasn't anchored by relating closely to brothers or sisters. I wanted to be a great spiritual person but I was trying to do it by myself.

After a year of cleaning carpets round the clock, working at full tilt and sleeping whenever there was a couple of hours between jobs, I was sent out with 'pioneers'. I was handed over to a squad of MFT members.

One of them got out of the van and said "Where's the center?" I asked "What's a center?" "Church center" "Oh, you mean the Ashby Street house?"

We were packed into the little Actionizer house for a workshop. Folding chairs were set up. We sat down. "No, brothers on the right. Sisters on the left." One brother started leading holy songs. We sang "Blessed Spring of Life", Oakland style, with "We're coming to the blessed land of Canaan with delight, we're leaving all our heavy burdens here Yee-haw!" Our songleader was visibly startled. "Guys, it's a holy song!" he said, shaking his head.

Larry Krishnek introduced himself as regional leader of MFT "Think of me as you Uncle Laban" he said, with a grin. Peter Spoto gave us the Formula Course lecture. "3 ½ years of fundraising, 3 ½ years of witnessing, then the blessing." Which years later, in a Boulder, Colorado MFT workshop, Lewis Burgess explained as "3 ½ years of fundraising, plus or minus infinity."

When I was assigned my first team, I arrived in Nashville, Tennessee with Alvaro, a brother who played violin beautifully. Mr Nakai took us to Kmart (the LL Bean of MFT) for our fundraising gear. The next morning I went out fundraising for the very first time. Being a Canadian, I wasn't sent out in Oakland.

I got into the Ford Econoline van, took a seat. The sister next to me didn't look at me and said "CAPTAIN! What are the seating assignments?"

Scott MaHaffey, my new captain, turned around and said "Uh, yeah, brothers sit with brothers and sisters sit with sisters." Kind of the way you'd explain to your kindergarten graduate kid brother that boys don't

hold hands walking down the street.

I started racing through snowdrifts and knocking on doors. I explained to people that I was doing some important spiritual work, Christian work, and here was a way to help. I explained it so well, I thought. Yet very few people wanted to give, let alone talk to me. They were courteous enough, but eager to shut the door.

It took me some time to realize I was talking down to them. (Of course I was! I had a rich intellectual understanding and was speaking to them from the heights of heaven, offering them a chance to lift their lives out of their rut and participate in this great providence. Plus, I hated to show that I didn't know how to do something. Everything I did had like I knew exactly what I was doing.) They didn't like someone telling them they were higher than they were, whether it was in my tone, the words I spoke to them, or just my failure to acknowledge them as my fellow humans.

I realized my "I know exactly what I'm doing here" attitude was putting people off. Putting on airs, you could say. Relying on a reputation you hadn't earned.

I set out to do the opposite. Like, I don't quite know how to do this, but I think it's something good. Whereas before I was coming on like "I know exactly what I'm doing here, and here's why you should help," now I was stumbling around, making a sincere effort even though I wasn't doing it right and I knew it.

People responded right away. I suppose I wasn't the first one to burst into MFT ready to show people how to fundraise, when it was my first time doing it. I'm grateful I had the ability to recognize that I was acting stuck up, and the training (thank you, theater school!) to be able to change the way I approached people. Cause I wasn't beaming down from heaven with a one-time opportunity for these earthlings to touch the robes of holiness. No, I was asking them to do something I couldn't do by myself. And maybe not looking so grand in the process. That's different.

I encountered another step like this when trying to raise my children. Living with my father-in-law, who loved to contradict anything I said, and my wife, who took turns siding with him and with me, it was difficult to give our children a clear standard. I tried. I knew how to explain the principles, and when they were little, they just absorbed it.

"Who made this grapefruit?" "Heavenly Father!!" "And where is He?" "Inside of me!!!"

In the teenage years, it got much harder. They would fuss and fight and argue any direction I tried to give. My daughter would actually ask me what I thought of something, and I'd happily tell her, grateful she was asking my advice. Then she'd go and do the opposite of what I said.

But the only thing that caught their attention was something I was reluctant to do: talk about my life growing up. I wanted to be building a totally new way of life, under the Blessing. But if I talked about times I faced the kind of thing they were going through, they were all ears. What I did. How I got through it. What I learned. But they needed the story.

I remember one night I was brushing my teeth, and Brandon, my oldest, was brushing his. I have a certain way I do it, by habit. Brush the outside teeth on the left, go around the front, outside on the right. Then brush inside on the right, go around to the left.

Brandon was watching me and brushing his teeth exactly the way I was, stroke for stroke. They may argue with you, but they'll always follow your example. And examples are always more influential than words. Stories from your life are examples.

It goes both ways. When a two year old Brandon threw a toy at the wall and exclaimed "Deez cwise!" with great disgust, I knew I had to watch my language when I got angry.

Examples matter, and someone is always going to follow yours, even if you don't know it. In a family this is always true, and if the world is to be one big family, we're all responsible to each other for the example we set. If you wouldn't want to see someone else do it, don't do it yourself.