

Additional stories, scriptures and quotes that might be of interest

You will gather the fruits of faith as you follow the principles God has established for its use.

Some of those principles are:

- Trust in God and in His willingness to provide help when needed, no matter how challenging the circumstance.
- Obey His commandments and live to demonstrate that He can trust you.
- Be sensitive to the quiet prompting of the Spirit.
- Act courageously on that prompting.
- Be patient and understanding when God lets you struggle to grow and answers come a piece at a time over an extended period.

Ensign > May 2003 ~[The Sustaining Power of Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Testing](#)

Richard G. Scott

“Awake, my soul! ... Rejoice, O my heart” ([2 Nephi 4:28](#))

Explain that we can follow Nephi’s example when we feel discouraged. Chapters 4 and 5 of 2 Nephi give several examples of things we can do to overcome feelings of discouragement. Discuss the following examples with class members:

- a. Read the scriptures ([2 Nephi 4:15](#)).
- b. Delight in and ponder the things of the Lord ([2 Nephi 4:16](#)).
- c. Trust in the Lord and look to Him for support ([2 Nephi 4:20–21, 34](#)).
- d. Engage in mighty prayer ([2 Nephi 4:24](#)).
- e. Be industrious; work ([2 Nephi 5:15, 17](#)).
- f. Serve in the temple ([2 Nephi 5:16](#)).

~Lesson 7: "I Know in Whom I Have Trusted", *Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*, (1999),29

Marvin J. Ashton, "Trusting Our Father," *Friend*, Jun 1988, inside front cover

(Adapted from an October 1985 general conference address. See *Ensign*, November 1985, pages 69–71.)

Many years ago I heard a story that impressed me. A beautiful little blind girl was sitting on the lap of her father in a crowded compartment in a train. A friend seated nearby said to the father, "Let me give you a little rest," and he reached over and took the little girl on his lap.

A few moments later the father said to her, "Do you know who is holding you?"

"No," the little girl replied, "but you do."

Some might say, "What a perfect trust this child had in her father." Others may say, "What a wonderful example of love." And still others might say, "What an example of faith." To me it indicates a beautiful blending of all of these principles. Affection, respect, and care over the years had placed in this little girl's heart a peace that surpasseth all understanding. She was at peace because she knew and trusted her father.

Our trust and our relationship with our Heavenly Father should be similar to that of the little blind girl with her earthly father. When sorrow, tragedy, and heartbreaks occur in our lives, wouldn't it be comforting if when the whisperings of God say, "Do you know why this has happened to you?" we could have the peace of mind to answer, "No, but You do."

Peace is a blessing that comes to those who trust in God. It is established through individual righteousness. Just as the little girl could sit peacefully on the stranger's lap because her father knew him, so we can find peace if we know our Father and learn to live by His principles

W. Craig Zwick, "The Lord Thy God Will Hold Thy Hand," *Ensign*, Nov 2003, 34

If we will ... walk hand in hand with Him in His paths, we will go forward with faith and never feel alone.



In the eyes and hearts of many people in the world today, there is evidence of doubt, fear, and hopelessness. Much of the insecurity in the world has filtered into our homes and personal lives. No matter what our age or circumstance, we all have a need to know that we have power in the present and hope in the future.

Listen to the words of Mormon: "Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power?" ([Morm. 5:23](#)).

Hands are one of the symbolically expressive parts of the body. In Hebrew, *yad*, the most common word for "hand," is also used metaphorically to mean power, strength, might (see William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* [1978], 205). Thus, hands signify power and strength.

The extended hand of our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, strengthens, lifts, and inspires people all across the world.

To be in the hands of God would suggest that we are not only under His watchful care but also that we are guarded and protected by His wondrous power.

Throughout the scriptures, reference is made to the hand of the Lord. His divine assistance is evidenced over and over again. His powerful hands created worlds, and yet they were gentle enough to bless the little children.

Consider John's words describing the resurrected and glorified Savior: "And when I saw him, ... he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; ... I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" ([Rev. 1:17-18](#)). When He lays His hand upon us, we, like John, can be alive in Him.

Twenty-four years ago, our tiny newborn son struggled for his life in the intensive care unit of a hospital. His lungs were not fully developed because of his premature birth, and he desperately fought for each breath of air. He was so small but with so much will to live. As young and inexperienced parents, my courageous and ever faithful wife, Jan, and I prayed that the Lord's hand would reach out and somehow help our baby boy continue to breathe. As I put my trembling hand through the small opening into the isolette, I felt so inadequate and powerless. I took hold of the tiny but perfect hand of our newborn son, and there was a powerful spiritual connection never to be forgotten. Two fingers from each of my hands covered his tiny head as I administered to him.

Our desire for him was pure, but we knew that his earthly experience rested in the Lord's hands and not in ours or in the medical team who cared for him. I then humbly realized that my quivering hands held power and authority well beyond my own. My fingers on his head symbolized the placing of God's hands and power upon our son. Following that blessing, in a moment of emotional peace, my eternal companion and I looked at each other across the isolette, feeling the spirit of renewed hope and comfort born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the personal effect of His Atonement. It was a powerful witness of His love for an infant son who had just left His presence. We were then better prepared to accept His will for our son. We truly felt we had placed our hands in the hands of the Savior. It was as if the Savior's own hands provided the critical respiratory aid, allowing our son to breathe and gain sustenance. With each breath and with each incremental bit of progress, we expressed prayerful thanks. Today, our healthy son and his indebted parents continue to be so grateful for the Savior's willing hands.

Among the supernal promises of coming forth in the morning of the First Resurrection and inheriting "thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers" are the additional promises of "all heights and depths" ([D&C 132:19](#)). The great plan of happiness includes a proverbial roller coaster of challenging times along with the most joyful times. Yes, we all have our moments of difficulty and heartbreak. Occasionally, they are so difficult for us that we just want to give up. There are times when our steps are unsteady, when we feel discouraged and even reach out in desperation.

Elder Holland reminds us that the "symbol of the cup that cannot pass is a cup that comes in our life as well as in [the Savior's]. It is in a much lesser way, to a much lesser degree, but it comes often enough to teach us that we have to obey" (*Trusting Jesus* [2003], 42).

Every one of us needs to know that we can go on in the strength of the Lord. We can put our hand in His, and we will feel His sustaining presence lift us to heights unattainable alone.

When a stricken father brought his terribly afflicted son to Jesus, Mark records that “Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose” ([Mark 9:27](#)).

We must trust in the Lord. If we give ourselves freely to Him, our burdens will be lifted and our hearts will be consoled.

Elder Scott has recently counseled: “Trust in God ... no matter how challenging the circumstance. ... Your peace of mind, your assurance of answers to vexing problems, your ultimate joy depend upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ” (“The Sustaining Power of Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Testing,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2003, 76, 78).

How do we learn to trust? How do we learn to extend our hand and connect to the comfort provided by the Lord?

Clear instruction came from the Lord to Joseph Smith: “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me. ... Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you” ([D&C 19:23, 38](#)).

Here are four keys:

- Learn
- Listen
- Seek the Spirit
- Pray always

The Lord will provide sustenance and support if we are willing to open the door and receive His hand of divine assistance.

President Thomas S. Monson reminds us of the Savior’s willing hand of rescue: “Adored is the hand that saves—even the hand of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ... With that hand he knocks upon the door of our understanding” (“Hands,” *Tambuli*, Mar. 1991, 5; *Ensign*, Aug. 1990, 5).

Recently our daughter and son-in-law were preparing to enjoy an evening together. They were rushing around trying to get ready and give the babysitter some last-minute instructions. They didn’t really notice the sad countenance of one of the children and the tears in the eyes of another until they were at the door, ready to leave. They realized that their children were apprehensive about their mommy and daddy being away from

them. So their parents gathered their four precious children around them. Their daddy asked them to put their hands out in front of them. All eight tiny hands were extended. Mom and Dad then kissed each hand and told them that when they missed them or they were frightened or needed to feel their love, they could put their little hands up to their cheeks and they would be able to feel Mommy's and Daddy's presence anytime. They were so happy, and when our daughter and son-in-law left, they saw four little children standing at the window with smiles on their faces and hands on their cheeks.

They trusted their parents. They knew they were loved.

Just as little children trust, each of us must have that same childlike, unreserved trust. We must all remember that we are sons and daughters of God and that He loves us very much. If we truly understand who we are, we will have an unfailing source of hope and comfort.

We can never complete "the race that is set before us" ([Heb. 12:1](#)) without placing our hand in the Lord's.

Several years ago, our only daughter decided to compete in a marathon. She trained and worked very hard, along with some of her friends. The race was difficult, and there were times when she wanted to quit. But she kept going, just concentrating on one step at a time. As she was approaching the middle part of the course, she heard someone behind her shout out, "Blind man on your left."

She turned her head only to see a blind man overtake her, holding the hand of another man. They were both running the race. As they passed, she could see how tightly the blind man held the hand of his friend.

Overcome with her own physical pain, she was lifted as she watched these two men run hand in hand. He who could see was motivated by his blind friend, and the blind man depended upon the connection he had to his friend's hand. Our daughter knew the blind man could never finish the race alone. She was inspired by the trust of the blind man and the devoted love of his friend.

In like manner, the Savior has stretched forth His hand to each of us so that we don't have to run alone. "To those [of us] who [occasionally] stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen" (*Trusting Jesus*, 43). As we advance toward the finish line, He will be there to save us; and for all this He gave His life.

Imagine the wounds in His hands. His weathered hands, yes, even His hands of torn flesh and physical sacrifice, give our own hands greater power and direction.

It is the wounded Christ who leads us through our moments of difficulty. It is He who bears us up when we need more air to breathe or direction to follow or even more courage to continue.

If we will keep the commandments of God and walk hand in hand with Him in His paths, we will go forward with faith and never feel alone.

Trust in His promise of eternal life, and allow peace and hope to distill upon you.

When we connect with the Author of Peace and with His perfect and redeeming love, then we can come to know the reality of the Lord's promise: "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying ... , Fear not; I will help thee" ([Isa. 41:13](#)).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and living Savior.

I testify that He lives and extends His loving hand to each of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Come What May, and Love It," *Liahona*, Nov 2008, 26–28

The way we react to adversity can be a major factor in how happy and successful we can be in life.



When I was young I loved playing sports, and I have many fond memories of those days. But not all of them are pleasant. I remember one day after my football team lost a tough game, I came home feeling discouraged. My mother was there. She listened to my sad story. She taught her children to trust in themselves and each other, not blame others for their misfortunes, and give their best effort in everything they attempted.

When we fell down, she expected us to pick ourselves up and get going again. So the advice my mother gave to me then wasn't altogether unexpected. It has stayed with me all my life.

"Joseph," she said, "come what may, and love it."

I have often reflected on that counsel.

I think she may have meant that every life has peaks and shadows and times when it seems that the birds don't sing and bells don't ring. Yet in spite of discouragement and adversity, those who are happiest seem to have a way of learning from difficult times, becoming stronger, wiser, and happier as a result.

There may be some who think that General Authorities rarely experience pain, suffering, or distress. If only that were true. While every man and woman on this stand today has experienced an abundant measure of joy, each also has drunk deeply from the cup of disappointment, sorrow, and loss. The Lord in His wisdom does not shield anyone from grief or sadness.

For me, the Lord has opened the windows of heaven and showered blessings upon my family beyond my ability to express. Yet like everyone else, I have had times in my life when it seemed that the heaviness of my heart might be greater than I could bear. During those times I think back to those tender days of my youth when great sorrows came at the losing end of a football game.

How little I knew then of what awaited me in later years. But whenever my steps led through seasons of sadness and sorrow, my mother's words often came back to me: "Come what may, and love it."

How can we love days that are filled with sorrow? We can't—at least not in the moment. I don't think my mother was suggesting that we suppress discouragement or deny the reality of pain. I don't think she was suggesting that we smother unpleasant truths beneath a cloak of pretended happiness. But I do believe that the way we react to adversity can be a major factor in how happy and successful we can be in life.

If we approach adversities wisely, our hardest times can be times of greatest growth, which in turn can lead toward times of greatest happiness.

Over the years I have learned a few things that have helped me through times of testing and trial. I would like to share them with you.

Learn to Laugh

The first thing we can do is learn to laugh. Have you ever seen an angry driver who, when someone else makes a mistake, reacts as though that person has insulted his honor, his family, his dog, and his ancestors all the way back to Adam? Or have you

had an encounter with an overhanging cupboard door left open at the wrong place and the wrong time which has been cursed, condemned, and avenged by a sore-headed victim?

There is an antidote for times such as these: learn to laugh.

I remember loading up our children in a station wagon and driving to Los Angeles. There were at least nine of us in the car, and we would invariably get lost. Instead of getting angry, we laughed. Every time we made a wrong turn, we laughed harder.

Getting lost was not an unusual occurrence for us. Once while heading south to Cedar City, Utah, we took a wrong turn and didn't realize it until two hours later when we saw the "Welcome to Nevada" signs. We didn't get angry. We laughed, and as a result, anger and resentment rarely resulted. Our laughter created cherished memories for us.

I remember when one of our daughters went on a blind date. She was all dressed up and waiting for her date to arrive when the doorbell rang. In walked a man who seemed a little old, but she tried to be polite. She introduced him to me and my wife and the other children; then she put on her coat and went out the door. We watched as she got into the car, but the car didn't move. Eventually our daughter got out of the car and, red faced, ran back into the house. The man that she thought was her blind date had actually come to pick up another of our daughters who had agreed to be a babysitter for him and his wife.

We all had a good laugh over that. In fact, we couldn't stop laughing. Later, when our daughter's real blind date showed up, I couldn't come out to meet him because I was still in the kitchen laughing. Now, I realize that our daughter could have felt humiliated and embarrassed. But she laughed with us, and as a result, we still laugh about it today.

The next time you're tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable.

Seek for the Eternal

The second thing we can do is seek for the eternal. You may feel singled out when adversity enters your life. You shake your head and wonder, "Why me?"

But the dial on the wheel of sorrow eventually points to each of us. At one time or another, everyone must experience sorrow. No one is exempt.

I love the scriptures because they show examples of great and noble men and women such as Abraham, Sarah, Enoch, Moses, Joseph, Emma, and Brigham. Each of them experienced adversity and sorrow that tried, fortified, and refined their characters.

Learning to endure times of disappointment, suffering, and sorrow is part of our on-the-job training. These experiences, while often difficult to bear at the time, are precisely the

kinds of experiences that stretch our understanding, build our character, and increase our compassion for others.

Because Jesus Christ suffered greatly, He understands our suffering. He understands our grief. We experience hard things so that we too may have increased compassion and understanding for others.

Remember the sublime words of the Savior to the Prophet Joseph Smith when he suffered with his companions in the smothering darkness of Liberty Jail:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.”¹

With that eternal perspective, Joseph took comfort from these words, and so can we. Sometimes the very moments that seem to overcome us with suffering are those that will ultimately suffer us to overcome.

The Principle of Compensation

The third thing we can do is understand the principle of compensation. The Lord compensates the faithful for every loss. That which is taken away from those who love the Lord will be added unto them in His own way. While it may not come at the time we desire, the faithful will know that every tear today will eventually be returned a hundredfold with tears of rejoicing and gratitude.

One of the blessings of the gospel is the knowledge that when the curtain of death signals the end of our mortal lives, life will continue on the other side of the veil. There we will be given new opportunities. Not even death can take from us the eternal blessings promised by a loving Heavenly Father.

Because Heavenly Father is merciful, a principle of compensation prevails. I have seen this in my own life. My grandson Joseph has autism. It has been heartbreaking for his mother and father to come to grips with the implications of this affliction.

They knew that Joseph would probably never be like other children. They understood what that would mean not only for Joseph but for the family as well. But what a joy he has been to us. Autistic children often have a difficult time showing emotion, but every time I'm with him, Joseph gives me a big hug. While there have been challenges, he has filled our lives with joy.

His parents have encouraged him to participate in sports. When he first started playing baseball, he was in the outfield. But I don't think he grasped the need to run after loose balls. He thought of a much more efficient way to play the game. When a ball was hit in

his direction, Joseph watched it go by and then pulled another baseball out of his pocket and threw that one to the pitcher.

Any reservations that his family may have had in raising Joseph, any sacrifices they have made have been compensated tenfold. Because of this choice spirit, his mother and father have learned much about children with disabilities. They have witnessed firsthand the generosity and compassion of family, neighbors, and friends. They have rejoiced together as Joseph has progressed. They have marveled at his goodness.

Trust in the Father and the Son

The fourth thing we can do is put our trust in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”² The Lord Jesus Christ is our partner, helper, and advocate. He wants us to be happy. He wants us to be successful. If we do our part, He will step in.

He who descended below all things will come to our aid. He will comfort and uphold us. He will strengthen us in our weakness and fortify us in our distress. He will make weak things become strong.³

One of our daughters, after giving birth to a baby, became seriously ill. We prayed for her, administered to her, and supported her as best we could. We hoped she would receive a blessing of healing, but days turned into months, and months turned into years. At one point I told her that this affliction might be something she would have to struggle with the rest of her life.

One morning I remember pulling out a small card and threading it through my typewriter. Among the words that I typed for her were these: “The simple secret is this: put your trust in the Lord, do your best, then leave the rest to Him.”

She did put her trust in God. But her affliction did not disappear. For years she suffered, but in due course, the Lord blessed her, and eventually she returned to health.

Knowing this daughter, I believe that even if she had never found relief, yet she would have trusted in her Heavenly Father and “[left] the rest to Him.”

Conclusion

Although my mother has long since passed to her eternal reward, her words are always with me. I still remember her advice to me given on that day long ago when my team lost a football game: “Come what may, and love it.”

I know why there must be opposition in all things. Adversity, if handled correctly, can be a blessing in our lives. We can learn to love it.

As we look for humor, seek for the eternal perspective, understand the principle of compensation, and draw near to our Heavenly Father, we can endure hardship and trial. We can say, as did my mother, “Come what may, and love it.” Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Thomas S. Monson, “Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith,” *Liahona*, Mar 2009, 2–7



Photograph by David Newman

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”¹ So spoke the wise Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel.

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, declared, “Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith.”²

In this dispensation, in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”³

This divinely inspired counsel comes to us today as crystal clear water to a parched earth.

We live in troubled times. Doctors’ offices are filled with individuals who are beset with emotional problems as well as physical distress. Divorce courts are overflowing because people have unsolved problems. Human resource administrators in government and industry work long hours in an effort to assist people with their problems.

One human resource officer assigned to handle petty grievances concluded an unusually hectic day by placing facetiously a little sign on his desk for those with unsolved problems. It read, “Have you tried prayer?” What he may not have realized

was that this simple counsel would solve more problems, alleviate more suffering, prevent more transgression, and bring about greater peace and contentment in the human soul than could be obtained in any other way.

A prominent American judge was asked what we as citizens of the countries of the world could do to reduce crime and disobedience to law and to bring peace and contentment into our lives and into our nations. He carefully replied, "I would suggest a return to the old-fashioned practice of family prayer."

Strength in Prayer

As a people, aren't we grateful that family prayer is not an out-of-date practice with us? There is no more beautiful sight in all this world than to see a family praying together. There is real meaning behind the oft-quoted "The family that prays together stays together."

The Lord directed that we have family prayer when He said, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed."⁴

Will you join me as we look in on a typical Latter-day Saint family offering prayers unto the Lord? Father, mother, and each of the children kneel, bow their heads, and close their eyes. A sweet spirit of love, unity, and peace fills the home. As father hears his tiny son pray unto God that his dad will do the right things and be obedient to the Lord's bidding, do you think that such a father would find it difficult to honor the prayer of his precious son? As a teenage daughter hears her sweet mother plead unto the Lord that her daughter will be inspired in the selection of her companions, that she will prepare herself for a temple marriage, don't you believe that such a daughter will seek to honor this humble, pleading petition of her mother, whom she so dearly loves? When father, mother, and each of the children earnestly pray that the fine sons in the family will live worthily that they may, in due time, receive a call to serve as ambassadors of the Lord in the mission fields of the Church, don't we begin to see how such sons grow to young manhood with an overwhelming desire to serve as missionaries?

I am sure that family prayer motivated a letter written some years ago by a young Latter-day Saint girl attending a Colorado high school. The students had been asked to prepare a letter to be written to a great man of their choice. Many addressed their letters to well-known athletes, to a noted astronaut, to the president of the United States, and to other celebrities. This young lady, however, addressed her letter to her father, and in the letter she stated: "I have decided to write this letter to you, Dad, because you are the greatest man that I have ever known. The overwhelming desire of my heart is that I might so live that I might have the privilege of being beside you and Mother and other members of the family in the celestial kingdom." That father never received a more cherished letter.

As we offer unto the Lord our family prayers and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Let us remember the injunction of Paul to the Hebrews: "For he

that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”⁵ If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. William Cowper declared, “Satan trembles, when he sees the weakest Saint upon his knees.”⁶ Those who feel that prayer might denote a physical or intellectual weakness should remember that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.

We cannot know what faith is if we have never had it, and we cannot obtain it as long as we deny it. Faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other.

Accepting His Invitation

If our desire is to discard all doubt and to substitute therefor an abiding faith, we have but to accept the invitation extended to you and to me in the Epistle of James:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”⁷

This promise motivated the young man Joseph Smith to seek God in prayer. He declared to us in his own words:

“At length I came to the conclusion that I ... must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to ‘ask of God,’ concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

“So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. ... It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.”⁸

Now, if we have hesitated in supplicating God our Eternal Father simply because we have not as yet made the attempt to pray, we certainly can take courage from the example of the Prophet Joseph. But let us remember, as did the Prophet, our prayer must be offered in faith, nothing wavering.

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that the brother of Jared saw the finger of God touch the stones in response to his plea.⁹

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Noah erected an ark in obedience to the command from God.¹⁰

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Abraham was willing to offer up his beloved Isaac as a sacrifice.[11](#)

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea.[12](#)

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Joshua and his followers brought the walls of Jericho tumbling down.[13](#)

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Joseph saw God our Eternal Father and Jesus Christ, His Son.[14](#)

Now, the skeptic may say that these mighty accounts of faith occurred long ago, that times have changed.

Have times really changed? Don't we today, as always, love our children and want them to live righteously? Don't we today, as always, need God's divine, protecting care? Don't we today, as always, continue to be at His mercy and in His debt for the very life He has given us?

Times have not really changed. Prayer continues to provide power—spiritual power. Prayer continues to provide peace—spiritual peace.

Faith in Action

Wherever we may be, our Heavenly Father can hear and answer the prayer offered in faith. This is especially true in the mission fields throughout the world. While presiding over the Canadian Mission, under the direction of President David O. McKay (1873–1970), Sister Monson and I had the opportunity of serving with some of the finest young men and women in all this world. The very lives of these young missionaries exemplified faith and prayer.

There sat in my office one day a newly arrived missionary. He was bright, strong, happy, and grateful to be a missionary. He was filled with enthusiasm and a desire to serve. As I spoke with him, I said, "Elder, I imagine that your father and mother wholeheartedly support you in your mission call." He lowered his head and replied, "Well, not quite. You see, President, my father is not a member of the Church. He doesn't believe as we believe, so he cannot fully appreciate the importance of my assignment."

Without hesitating and prompted by a Source not my own, I said to him, "Elder, if you will honestly and diligently serve God in proclaiming His message, your father will join the Church before your mission is concluded." He clasped my hand in a vise-like grip, the tears welled up in his eyes and began to roll forth down his cheeks, and he declared, "To see my father accept the truth would be the greatest blessing that could come into my life."

This young man did not sit idly by hoping and wishing that the promise would be fulfilled, but rather he followed the sage advice that has been given of old: "Pray as though everything depended upon God. Work as though everything depended upon you." Such was the missionary service of this young man.

At every missionary conference I would seek him out before the meetings and ask, "Elder, how's Dad progressing?"

His reply would invariably be, "No progress, President, but I know the Lord will fulfill the promise given to me through you as my mission president." The days turned to weeks and the weeks to months, and finally, just two weeks before we ourselves left the mission field to return home, I received a letter from the father of this missionary. That father wrote:

"Dear Brother Monson:

"I wish to thank you so much for taking such good care of my son who recently completed a mission in Canada. He has been an inspiration to us.

"My son was promised when he left on his mission that I would become a member of the Church before his return. This promise was, I believe, made to him by you, unknown to me.

"I am happy to report that I was baptized into the Church one week before he completed his mission and am at present time athletic director of the MIA and have a teaching assignment.

"My son is now attending BYU, and his younger brother was also recently baptized and confirmed a member of the Church.

"May I again thank you for all the kindness and love bestowed upon my son by his brothers in the mission field during the past two years.

"Yours very truly, a grateful father."

The humble prayer of faith had once again been answered.

There is a golden thread that runs through every account of faith from the beginning of the world to the present time. Abraham, Noah, the brother of Jared, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and countless others wanted to be obedient to the will of God. They had ears that could hear, eyes that could see, and hearts that could know and feel.

They never doubted. They trusted.

Through personal prayer, through family prayer, by trusting in God with faith, nothing wavering, we can call down to our rescue His mighty power. His call to us is as it has ever been: “Come unto me.”[15](#)

Jeffrey R. Holland, “‘An High Priest of Good Things to Come’,” *Ensign*, Nov 1999, 36

Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don’t come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, they come.



On those days when we have special need of heaven’s help, we would do well to remember one of the titles given to the Savior in the epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of Jesus’ “more excellent ministry” and why He is “the mediator of a better covenant” filled with “better promises,” this author—presumably the Apostle Paul—tells us that through His mediation and Atonement, Christ became “an high priest of good things to come.”[1](#)

Every one of us has times when we need to know things will get better. Moroni spoke of it in the Book of Mormon as “hope for a better world.”[2](#) For emotional health and spiritual stamina, everyone needs to be able to look forward to some respite, to something pleasant and renewing and hopeful, whether that blessing be near at hand or still some distance ahead. It is enough just to know we can get there, that however measured or far away, there is the promise of “good things to come.”

My declaration is that this is precisely what the gospel of Jesus Christ offers us, especially in times of need. There *is* help. There *is* happiness. There really *is* light at the end of the tunnel. It is the Light of the World, the Bright and Morning Star, the “light that is endless, that can never be darkened.”[3](#) It is the very Son of God Himself. In loving

praise far beyond Romeo's reach, we say, "What light through yonder window breaks?" It is the return of hope, and Jesus is the Sun. [4](#) To any who may be struggling to see that light and find that hope, I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve. Christ comes to you in His "more excellent ministry" with a future of "better promises." He is your "high priest of good things to come."

I think of newly called missionaries leaving family and friends to face, on occasion, some rejection and some discouragement and, at least in the beginning, a moment or two of homesickness and perhaps a little fear.

I think of young mothers and fathers who are faithfully having their families while still in school—or just newly out—trying to make ends meet even as they hope for a brighter financial future someday. At the same time, I think of other parents who would give any earthly possession they own to have a wayward child return.

I think of single parents who face all of this but face it alone, having confronted death or divorce, alienation or abandonment, or some other misfortune they had not foreseen in happier days and certainly had not wanted.

I think of those who want to be married and aren't, those who desire to have children and cannot, those who have acquaintances but very few friends, those who are grieving over the death of a loved one or are themselves ill with disease. I think of those who suffer from sin—their own or someone else's—who need to know there is a way back and that happiness can be restored. I think of the disconsolate and downtrodden who feel life has passed them by, or now wish that it would pass them by. To all of these and so many more, I say: Cling to your faith. Hold on to your hope. "Pray always, and be believing." [5](#) Indeed, as Paul wrote of Abraham, he "against [all] hope believed in hope" and "staggered not ... through unbelief." He was "strong in faith" and was "fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, he was able ... to perform." [6](#)

Even if you cannot always see that silver lining on your clouds, God can, for He is the very source of the light you seek. He does love you, and He knows your fears. He hears your prayers. He is your Heavenly Father, and surely He matches with His own the tears His children shed.

In spite of this counsel, I know some of you do truly feel at sea, in the most frightening sense of that term. Out in troubled waters, you may even now be crying with the poet:

*It darkens. I have lost the ford.
There is a change on all things made.
The rocks have evil faces, Lord,
And I am [sore] afraid.* [7](#)

No, it is not without a recognition of life's tempests but fully and directly because of them that I testify of God's love and the Savior's power to calm the storm. Always remember in that biblical story that He was out there on the water also, that He faced the worst of it

right along with the newest and youngest and most fearful. Only one who has fought against those ominous waves is justified in telling *us—as well as the sea*—to “be still.” [8](#) Only one who has taken the full brunt of such adversity could ever be justified in telling us in such times to “be of good cheer.” [9](#) Such counsel is not a jaunty pep talk about the power of positive thinking, though positive thinking is much needed in the world. No, Christ knows better than all others that the trials of life can be very deep and we are not shallow people if we struggle with them. But even as the Lord avoids sugary rhetoric, He rebukes faithlessness and He deplores pessimism. He expects us to believe!

No one’s eyes were more penetrating than His, and much of what He saw pierced His heart. Surely His ears heard every cry of distress, every sound of want and despair. To a degree far more than we will ever understand, He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” [10](#) Indeed, to the layman in the streets of Judea, Christ’s career must have seemed a failure, a tragedy, a good man totally overwhelmed by the evils surrounding Him and the misdeeds of others. He was misunderstood or misrepresented, even hated from the beginning. No matter what He said or did, His statements were twisted, His actions suspected, His motives impugned. In the entire history of the world no one has ever loved so purely or served so selflessly—and been treated so diabolically for His effort. Yet nothing could break His faith in His Father’s plan or His Father’s promises. Even in those darkest hours at Gethsemane and Calvary, He pressed on, continuing to trust in the very God whom He momentarily feared had forsaken Him.

Because Christ’s eyes were unfailingly fixed on the future, He could endure all that was required of Him, suffer as no man can suffer except it be “unto death,” [11](#) as King Benjamin said, look upon the wreckage of individual lives and the promises of ancient Israel lying in ruins around Him and still say then and now, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” [12](#) How could He do this? How could He believe it? *Because He knows that for the faithful, things will be made right soon enough. He is a King; He speaks for the crown; He knows what can be promised.* He knows that “the Lord ... will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. ... For the needy shall not alway[s] be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.” [13](#) He knows that “the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” He knows that “the Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.” [14](#)

Forgive me for a personal conclusion, which does not represent the terrible burdens so many of you carry but it *is* meant to be encouraging. Thirty years ago last month, a little family set out to cross the United States to attend graduate school—no money, an old car, every earthly possession they owned packed into less than half the space of the smallest U-Haul trailer available. Bidding their apprehensive parents farewell, they drove exactly 34 miles up the highway, at which point their beleaguered car erupted.

Pulling off the freeway onto a frontage road, the young father surveyed the steam, matched it with his own, then left his trusting wife and two innocent children—the youngest just three months old—to wait in the car while he walked the three miles or so

to the southern Utah metropolis of Kanarraville, population then, I suppose, 65. Some water was secured at the edge of town, and a very kind citizen offered a drive back to the stranded family. The car was attended to and slowly—*very* slowly—driven back to St. George for inspection—U-Haul trailer and all.

After more than two hours of checking and rechecking, no immediate problem could be detected, so once again the journey was begun. In exactly the same amount of elapsed time at exactly the same location on that highway with exactly the same pyrotechnics from under the hood, the car exploded again. It could not have been 15 feet from the earlier collapse, probably not 5 feet from it! Obviously the most precise laws of automotive physics were at work.

Now feeling more foolish than angry, the chagrined young father once more left his trusting loved ones and started the long walk for help once again. This time the man providing the water said, “Either you or that fellow who looks just like you ought to get a new radiator for that car.” For the second time a kind neighbor offered a lift back to the same automobile and its anxious little occupants. He didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry at the plight of this young family.

“How far have you come?” he said. “Thirty-four miles,” I answered. “How much farther do you have to go?” “Twenty-six hundred miles,” I said. “Well, *you* might make that trip, and *your wife* and those two little kiddies might make that trip, but *none of you* are going to make it in *that* car.” He proved to be prophetic on all counts.

Just two weeks ago this weekend, I drove by that exact spot where the freeway turnoff leads to a frontage road, just three miles or so west of Kanarraville, Utah. That same beautiful and loyal wife, my dearest friend and greatest supporter for all these years, was curled up asleep in the seat beside me. The two children in the story, and the little brother who later joined them, have long since grown up and served missions, married perfectly, and are now raising children of their own. The automobile we were driving this time was modest but very pleasant and very safe. In fact, except for me and my lovely Pat situated so peacefully at my side, nothing of that moment two weeks ago was even remotely like the distressing circumstances of three decades earlier.

Yet in my mind’s eye, for just an instant, I thought perhaps I saw on that side road an old car with a devoted young wife and two little children making the best of a bad situation there. Just ahead of them I imagined that I saw a young fellow walking toward Kanarraville, with plenty of distance still ahead of him. His shoulders seemed to be slumping a little, the weight of a young father’s fear evident in his pace. In the scriptural phrase his hands did seem to “hang down.” [15](#) In that imaginary instant, I couldn’t help calling out to him: “Don’t give up, boy. Don’t you quit. You keep walking. You keep trying. There is help and happiness ahead—a lot of it—30 years of it now, and still counting. You keep your chin up. It will be all right in the end. Trust God and believe in good things to come.”

I testify that God lives, that He is our Eternal Father, that He loves each of us with a love divine. I testify that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh and, having triumphed in this world, is an heir of eternity, a joint-heir with God, and now stands on the right hand of His Father. I testify that this is Their true Church and that They sustain us in our hour of need—and always will, even if we cannot recognize that intervention. Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*. Of that I personally attest. I thank my Father in Heaven for His goodness past, present, and future, and I do so in the name of His Beloved Son and most generous high priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. [Heb. 8:6](#); [Heb. 9:11](#).
2. [Ether 12:4](#).
3. See [John 8:12](#); [Rev. 22:16](#); [Mosiah 16:9](#).

How can I recognize the promptings of the Spirit?

That sweet, quiet voice of inspiration comes more as a feeling than it does as a sound. ... The Holy Ghost communicates with our spirits through the mind more than through the physical senses. This guidance comes as thoughts, as feelings through promptings and impressions. We may *feel* the words of spiritual communication more than *hear* them, and see with spiritual rather than with mortal eyes.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Impressions of the Spirit can come in response to urgent prayer or unsolicited when needed. Sometimes the Lord reveals truth to you when you are not actively seeking it, such as when you are in danger and do not know it. However, the Lord will not force you to learn. You must exercise your agency to authorize the Spirit to teach you. As you make this a practice in your life, you will be more perceptive to the feelings that come with spiritual guidance. ...

The inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit can be overcome or masked by strong emotions, such as anger, hate, passion, fear, or pride. When such influences are present, it is like trying to savor the delicate flavor of a grape while eating a jalapeño

pepper. Both flavors are present, but one completely overpowers the other. In like manner, strong emotions overcome the delicate promptings of the Holy Spirit.

John K. Carmack, "When Our Children Go Astray," *Ensign*, Feb 1997, 7

Parents of wayward children can find guidance and strength in gospel teachings.

Despite our best efforts to raise children to love the Lord, follow his commandments, and live happy, productive, and healthy lives, our sons and daughters sometimes go astray. Straying can mean involvement in drug abuse, criminal activity, immorality, and even abuse of parents and others. Other forms of drifting, perhaps less serious but nevertheless troubling, include underachieving, dropping out of school, and finding little purpose or happiness in life.

Typical and normal parental reactions include sorrow, despair, desperation, depression, feelings of guilt and unworthiness, and a sense of failure. In such circumstances, parents may also experience anger and withdrawal and may feel like simply giving up. These reactions usually make matters worse, deepening the problems they face.

My wife and I have friends who, because of their son's behavior, have suffered almost every problem identified above. The last five or six years have been a hideous nightmare for them. They have tried every possible approach, even placing their son in expensive rehabilitation programs in which he typically lasts a week, despite his good intentions.

The father shared his lament and his hope in these words: "There is no how-to book with young people like our son. You pray to the Lord that he will guide your thoughts and your actions, and you hope you will make wise decisions." He and his wife, firm in their faith, declare, "We have the ultimate hope that because he is sealed to us, the bonds of eternal covenants will be stronger than the bonds of the adversary that now seem to grip his life. We live with hope that the day will come when he will return to his eternal family and repent of his way of life."

Our friends represent thousands of others in similar circumstances who are meeting challenges almost beyond their capacity to endure. Trials of parenthood are most often associated with children's growing-up years, but these challenges can arise with children of any age. As parents, we don't cease our concerns when our children reach adulthood. In an effort to extend understanding and help to parents who may be suffering any of these feelings about their children, it may be helpful to (1) look at two related problems some families face, (2) examine doctrines that play a fundamental role

in helping parents deal with those problems and others of similar gravity, and (3) then discuss how parents can stay strong during the years of turmoil.

Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol. One set of parents grieved deeply and suffered throughout much of their lives because at the age of 13 their son began regularly consuming great quantities of alcoholic beverages and never recovered from the alcoholism that eventually caused his premature death.

Shortly before the son's last illness that ended his tortured life, a brother asked him, "When did you take your first drink?" The answer was both startling and revealing. He explained that one day when he was only five years old and playing at a friend's home while the parents were away, he was offered a drink of beer. Not knowing anything about alcoholic beverages, and thinking his friend meant root beer, he tasted his first alcoholic drink. He liked the taste and effect of it. By age 13 he was an alcoholic.

For the rest of their son's life, the parents spent a major part of their time praying, worrying, and struggling unsuccessfully to reclaim and assist their son. They found him in pool halls and bars, with drinking buddies, and in prison. Some years they did not know where he was, a sad state of affairs in which imagination can be even worse than reality. During other years, with the influence of Alcoholics Anonymous and the loving attention of others who had also struggled with similar problems, he was sober and lived a productive existence.

Throughout all their years of heartache, these parents never gave up. They spent countless hours on their knees praying for their son, often pleading to know where he was. When his mother became seriously ill, no one knew where the son was, but the Spirit summoned the young man to the telephone and brought him home. It was he who helped his father and sister care for his dying mother during her last days on earth.

Drugs. In Los Angeles during years I served as a priesthood leader, a number of parents had children who were caught up in the drug culture so prevalent in the 1960s. One father came to me for advice and comfort. Two of his sons had become addicted to hard-core drugs, resulting in nightmarish consequences to him and his wife.

During this couple's years of child rearing and in spite of whatever normal parental mistakes they may have made along the way, they had constantly provided their children a loving example and had done their best to teach righteous gospel principles in the home. Yet two of their sons made tragic choices anyway. As the severity of the problems became known, the parents castigated themselves harshly, and the father felt unworthy to continue in his priesthood responsibility. I persuaded him to continue serving in the Church and expressed confidence in the future for his children.

I shared with him then, and would now like to share with all parents, especially those suffering pain and a sense of frustration as they watch their dreams for their children

turn to ashes, some thoughts about relevant doctrines that provide needed hope and balm.

Relevant Doctrines

Some parents suffer greatly because they blame themselves unduly for having been poor parents. In this position they are likely to misapply President David O. McKay's wonderfully prophetic statement that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5). They seem to draw the unintended implication that since they have a child who is abusing drugs or alcohol, they must be failures as parents; hence, no matter how hard they have tried, no other good they have done or success they have achieved can compensate for their parental failure at home. Because this statement was intended to inspire parents to become or stay involved with their children, it should not be taken to mean that parents who have indeed put great time, effort, and sacrifice into parenting, and yet who have still not reaped the desired rewards, have failed. A closer look at additional counsel and doctrines may provide much needed perspective.

• **Trust Father in Heaven.** Most of our lives are a complex mixture of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, good and bad. Heavenly Father fully understands our conditions here in mortality, having allowed those conditions and provided agency as a kind of living laboratory for human growth. Moreover, he himself must have experienced all of the conditions and feelings we do, for, as the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "God himself was once as we are now" and "dwelt on an earth" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1977], 345, 346). Not only did one of his choicest sons rebel during our premortal existence, but that son also persuaded a third part of the Father's children to take a devilish path.

If you are experiencing extreme pain as a parent of a prodigal child, remember parents in scripture who similarly suffered. Some of these are Adam and Eve, whose son Cain murdered his brother Abel; Lehi and Sariah, whose two older sons rebelled; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those towering figures who, with their wives, experienced much parental sorrow; Alma the Younger, who had a rebellious son, Corianton; and Mosiah, who had several rebellious sons.

In 1929 Elder Orson F. Whitney of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "You parents of the wilful and the wayward! Don't give them up. Don't cast them off. They are not utterly lost. The Shepherd will find his sheep. They were his before they were yours—long before he entrusted them to your care; and you cannot begin to love them as he loves them. They have but strayed in ignorance from the Path of Right, and God is merciful to ignorance. Only the fulness of knowledge brings the fulness of accountability. Our Heavenly Father is far more merciful, infinitely more charitable, than even the best of his servants, and the Everlasting Gospel is mightier in power to save than our narrow finite minds can comprehend" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

Indeed, throughout the ages, many parents have faced significant struggles with their children and have received support, help, and guidance from our Father in Heaven as they've sought to find ways to reach their children.

• **Respect Agency.** A governing doctrine of the universe, applicable in all ages including the eternities before God formed this earth, is that God has granted to people their agency—the right to choose between good and evil. Because we have agency, it is fair and just that we account to him for our use of it, whether good or bad. If we had no agency, God would be responsible for us and everything we did, which would result in our never really knowing the depth of our personal convictions regarding either good or evil.

This is not a neutral world. Good and evil bombard us and our children. Teaching our children correct principles allows them to make informed choices. But when children make choices contrary to gospel teachings, they always suffer the consequences, some of which are serious. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, “My people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, *by the things which they suffer* ([D&C 105:6](#); emphasis added). While it’s the harder pathway, the Lord is aware of young people who have been caught in addictive behaviors and is watching patiently over them as they learn through their own experience about good and evil.

Paraphrasing the Prophet Joseph Smith, Elder Orson F. Whitney said “that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. ... They will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

We can and should expect much of our children, but we cannot force them into the Lord’s mold. Our children will not stay with the Church and live the gospel unless they *want* to. Once their wayward children grow up, the time may come when the parents will need to adjust their present expectations and approach, accepting things as they are rather than continuing in turmoil. We should not expect perfection in our children but, rather, adopt in patience and love the Lord’s eternal view of things.

• **Refrain from Judging Others Unrighteously.** Because God and Jesus Christ alone (see [D&C 76:68](#)) can judge fully what is in people’s hearts, they alone can wisely and perfectly temper justice with mercy, conditioned on whether our hearts have been softened and whether we have repented of our individual sins. It is for this reason we are admonished not to judge others unrighteously. Harsh condemnation of others by us will bring to us similar condemnation from our Heavenly Father. (See JST, Matt. 7:1–2.)

God, as well as his Son, is a totally righteous and completely trustworthy judge, perfected in light, knowledge, and understanding.

One particularly heartrending experience comes to parents whose children express a same-sex preference. Parents may wonder how to be generally supportive of their young adult without condoning specific immoral behavior. Harsh and judgmental reactions, threats to disown them, or other mistreatment of such a son or daughter do not help. Parents need to continue to extend loving concern to the young man or woman while upholding God's law of chastity and morality.

Because our children follow a different course than we have taught them does not give us license to reject them. We can rarely know in full what forces cause our children's lives to careen out of control. Only God has all of the tools and facts sufficient to identify the forces that bring about undesired effects. He alone, through the Son (see [John 5:22](#)), can and "shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" ([Eccl. 12:14](#)). Thus our relationships with our children are valuable. Our children are as old as we are in the eternal sense (see [D&C 93:29](#)). We must not reject them or judge so quickly or harshly that the damage becomes nearly irreversible.

• **Turn to the Savior.** Because God knows the inevitable consequences of agency—choosing right as well as wrong, and knowing that all will transgress to some degree—he has provided a Savior to snatch us from our precarious situation. The Savior has taken upon himself the burden of our sins, pain, infirmities, and feelings of despair, and we are able to receive of the healing power of his Atonement if we soften our hearts and repent of our sins and become a different person. He mourns with us in our extreme agitation, even when his long view of things requires that for our ultimate good he withhold his hand from lifting our burdens too quickly.

The spirit of the Savior's teachings helps us understand how we should react when our children go astray. We should prepare to leave the "ninety and nine" and to go seeking the one (see [Luke 15:1–7](#)); to search the house to reclaim the lost coin (see [Luke 15:8–10](#)); and to welcome home even one who has wasted our goods in riotous living (see [Luke 15:11–32](#)). How do we begin?

Seek the Lord. Problems with wayward children are usually complicated and vary from child to child. There is no one right way to reach them. Seeking help from the Lord in prayer may be the best or only way we can obtain needed direction specific for our situation. In Romans 8:26 [[Rom. 8:26](#)] the Apostle Paul explains that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Drawing very close to the Lord and seeking the Spirit's guidance can help us know what steps to take.

Recognize the Spirit. Having drawn close to the Lord in deep and sincere prayer, we must learn to recognize promptings of the Spirit. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord promises that he will "impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind" (see

[D&C 11:12–14](#)). We can receive specific instructions through the Spirit about what our child needs at a given time.

Heed promptings. Once we receive whisperings of the Spirit, we need to move forward steadfastly. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,” states the proverb, “and lean not unto thine own understanding” ([Prov. 3:5](#)). Sometimes the things we feel impressed to do may require faith on our part. Only the Lord knows the full picture. If we are willing to turn our minds and hearts over to him, we can obtain insight that allows us to take a wise course of action for our child at any given time. Knowing we are directed by the Lord results in great personal inner strength during troubled times.

Remember that we are not abandoned. The scriptures are full of hope and peace. That Jesus Christ understood exactly what parents of wayward children may suffer is apparent from his magnificent parable of the prodigal son. In that parable the Lord made it clear that we can eventually triumph over almost all obstacles by exercising patience and developing greater wisdom and understanding.

- **Never Give Up.** If you cannot seem to reach your daughter or son now, you can at least keep trying and keep loving them, for the very will to reach out, nurture, and extend help to another is an act of love that does not always go unnoticed. President Joseph F. Smith offered advice that has helped me at difficult times: “Fathers, if you wish your children to be taught in the principles of the gospel, if you wish them to love the truth and understand it, if you wish them to be obedient to and united with you, love them! ... However wayward they might be, ... when you speak or talk to them, do it not in anger, do it not harshly, in a condemning spirit. Speak to them kindly. ... You can’t drive them; they won’t be driven” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 316).

This prophetic counsel from President Smith and the doctrines summarized above should give all parents hope that they can ultimately triumph if they remain prayerful, helpful, and maintain an open door for their children. We must build our children and hold on to them. If, during their younger years, we create family friendships that strengthen and support them, we have a better chance of helping them later through their trials and temptations.

Counsel to Parents

I have a few suggestions to share that may help parents weather through trials with wayward children.

- **Take Care of Yourselves First.** Your children may depend on you for advice, maturity, and assistance in handling difficult situations. If you are not functioning well physically and emotionally during such critical moments, you are less likely to be of help to your children. Don’t let the chaos of their lives consume yours. Continue with your own appropriate activities as far as you reasonably can.

Children may challenge you and question your standards and judgment. Be ready to share your convictions and wisdom. Sometimes the moment to talk will be late at night when you are tired, but respond positively to those moments when the door swings open between you and your child.

- **Seek Help.** In recent years, medical science has learned much about alcoholism, drug abuse, and other serious vices and conditions. I strongly urge parents of drug and alcohol abusers to investigate the latest techniques and services available to assist and rehabilitate troubled youth. As appropriate, consult with your home teachers, your quorum leaders, and your bishop or branch president.

- **Try Not to Live through the Achievements of Your Children.** Some parents unwisely place their own personal hopes and dreams on the achievements of their children. While parents properly rejoice in the successes of their children, too much emphasis on parental expectations may place undue pressure and stress on their children. Clashes between parents and children can be severe when parents fail to understand and respect their children's desires and aspirations that differ from their own.

- **Support Your Prodigal Child in Wisdom.** Often there are others who have greater influence in your children's lives than you do during troubled times. Eventually one of them may ignite the spark that begins the process of turning around your son or daughter. It may be a close friend, a sweetheart, a teacher, a wise Scoutmaster, a seminary teacher, or a priesthood, Young Women, or Relief Society leader. Sometimes youth reconsider their choices or lives after experiencing the hard knocks administered by judicial or law enforcement systems.

Often, however, youth finally turn again to their families. As in the parable of the prodigal son, a wayward son or daughter will sometimes come to himself or herself and return home for balm and support. When this happens, we have an opportunity to help them make a new beginning after receiving them with open arms.

- **Avoid Denial and Undue Feelings of Self-Blame.** While all parents make mistakes, most have deep desires to honorably fulfill their parental responsibilities. Some parents, however, deny the reality of the path their children are treading. They make excuses hoping the evidence is not what it seems. It is better for everyone involved to determine quickly whether or not problems are serious, for early intervention can be vital in curbing problem behavior.

Other parents become overwhelmed in self-pity and shame. These emotions may crowd out their love for a daughter or son. Think of the effect on a child of feeling that his parents are ashamed of him or her. This can drive a wedge between parent and child that closes the door to the prodigal if and when he or she desires to return.

If we don't step up to challenges that can serve to perfect and polish our own characters, we lose opportunities to grow and expand our capacity to understand, love,

nurture, and serve others. Thus, through our personal efforts to help our children secure *their* salvation, we may also be working out our *own* necessary contributions to our own salvation.

• **Remember the Last Human Freedom.** Every morning, parents whose children have gone astray face the stern test of whether they can continue to function, love, and serve as parents when faced with so much pain. I suggest they remember Viktor E. Frankl's survival as a Jew in a German concentration camp. Though only one prisoner in 28 survived, Viktor Frankl lived to write that a "man *can* preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress.

"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (*Man's Search for Meaning* [1981], 74–75).

He added that prisoners facing the daily cruelty, savagery, and lack of respect for life and human dignity either perished or learned that "*it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us*" (*Man's Search for Meaning*, 85). As with parents of straying children, they were the ones being questioned by life, every day and every hour. These tests were different for every woman and man and changed from moment to moment. They learned that nothing can be so bad as to ruin their inner peace and dignity. They discovered that proper attitudes gave them freedom from some of the ills they were having to endure.

Our friends whose son has caused them so much pain told me, "We spend far more time in our scriptures and on our knees than we ever did before." Parents often learn to survive themselves and become much stronger as they struggle to help and reclaim their wayward children.

Although many parents will not experience bumps and turbulence as hard to navigate as some of those we have here discussed, some, including the family into which I was born, have and will experience frightening challenges. Do not give in to paralyzing feelings of guilt and hopelessness. Seek spiritual help and peace. Be strong and courageous. You will see it through.

In 1919 at general conference, Alonzo A. Hinckley, then president of the Deseret Stake of Zion, quoted Elder James E. Talmage of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as follows: "I promise the Saints in the Deseret stake of Zion that if their lives are such that they can look their sons and daughters in the face, and if any of them have gone astray, that the parents are able to say, 'It is contrary to my instruction and my life's example; it is against every effort of love, long suffering, faith, prayer and devotion that that boy or girl has gone,'—I promise you, fathers and mothers, that not one of them shall be lost

unless they have sinned away the power to repent” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 161).

Balm and hope abound in that counsel. We may not understand exactly how Elder Talmage’s counsel will come to pass in this life, but we can understand that there is more to the relationship of righteous parents and their children than we fully understand in this life and more help available with the problems that arise in that relationship than we grasp with our worldly logic. We are not alone in our struggle to save and preserve the sealing between us and our children.

I hope that all parents of wayward children will do their best to help their children and yet retain a bright hope within themselves in the ultimate outcome of their divinely appointed parental mission.

Let’s Talk about It

This article may furnish material for a family home evening discussion or for personal consideration. You might consider questions such as:

1. How can we show love and support for suffering parents whose children have gone astray?
2. Why is respecting agency important when trying to help wayward children?
3. What can parents do to maintain their own balance and strength during troubled times?

“Letting Go without Giving Up,” *Ensign*, Sep 2002, 8

Our mentally ill son and his substance abuse changed our lives dramatically. Could we ever learn to deal with his destructive actions?

When he was a boy, our son’s report cards were often disappointing even though he was intelligent. He sometimes became angry and aggressive. At other times he showed unusual anxiety. By high school he seemed increasingly unhappy and unable to fit in with friends. He began to skip school frequently. His bizarre haircuts and odd clothing became a source of friction.

A doctor told us these behaviors were normal teenage rebellion and he would grow out of them in a few years, but my instincts told me otherwise. Other actions made us more apprehensive. Our son spent long periods of time at the sink, washing his hands over and over again; he wouldn't touch things for fear of becoming contaminated. He isolated himself in his bedroom.

I became consumed with uncertainty and fear. My husband and I were trying to rear our two children in love and righteousness. We prayed together and taught our children the gospel. We read the scriptures together. We sang Primary songs and hymns at family home evening. We attended church together. Our son's Church teachers and peers often praised his gospel knowledge. Yet in spite of this, his life and his interest in the gospel were crumbling.

My husband and I felt something was seriously wrong. Our son's behavior did not seem normal, while our daughter was doing well. For years we searched for answers but found none that helped. Then, at last, a psychiatrist correctly diagnosed our son as having a serious mental illness. Though the diagnosis sounded formidable and we left the doctor's office feeling numb and afraid, it was a relief to finally have an explanation for our son's erratic behavior.

Learning to Cope

Though our teenage son's future looked bleak and forbidding, my husband and I prayed that through love and stricter discipline we could help him. But discipline was met with fierce denial and anger. Innocent comments were interpreted negatively. The tension in our home became almost tangible. Because I was doing most of the disciplining, our son directed most of his anger at me. It came to the point where he couldn't even stand next to me without becoming defensive and angry. It seemed that everything I did was wrong.

As my husband and I searched for answers, we went through a time of intense personal struggle and individual testing. As solid as I thought my faith in Jesus Christ was, I soon realized that my level of faith was inadequate for the trials I was facing. I needed faith to move mountains, yet I felt equipped with a shovel instead of dynamite and earthmovers. I began to pray more fervently, pleading many times each day for wisdom and strength. I attended the temple more frequently for solace, peace, and revelation. I received priesthood blessings that gave me hope and guidance. I began fasting weekly with my husband as we realized the need for greater spiritual strength.

Inspiration and insight began to come. Once I was sitting in church on Mother's Day, wondering if I was up to the challenges that my son presented. The children began singing, "Mother, I love you; mother, I do. Father in Heaven has sent me to you" (*Children's Songbook*, 207). The words stunned me and brought an important realization: Heavenly Father had *sent* our son to us. Whatever the reason, he was meant to be ours, and we were trusted to handle the difficult assignment of raising him.

Letting Go

Our son moved out of the house shortly after graduating from high school and began living a lifestyle totally foreign to us. We worried that he was now using drugs regularly. Occasionally, he came home for Sunday dinner and attended church with us, but his behavior continued to deteriorate.

Of necessity, we began letting go of the hopes and dreams we once held for our son and gradually came to accept the full reality of his situation. His illness was the major cause of his substance abuse and greatly complicated any recovery attempts. Our lives became a roller coaster as our son took us on a wild ride of ups and downs. He initially chose not to take the medications his doctor prescribed, preferring to medicate himself with illegal drugs. Every day seemed to bring a new crisis, and every phone call seemed to bring unwelcome news: "I quit my job," "I'm in jail," "Someone stole my paycheck," "My car has broken down," "I have hepatitis." I often felt completely drained and wondered if our years of fasting and prayer were making any difference.

On one such day, I opened the Doctrine and Covenants and read: "Blessed art thou for what thou hast done; for thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit. If it had not been so, thou wouldst not have come to the place where thou art at this time" ([D&C 6:14](#)). The Spirit whispered that our son was indeed being helped by our fasts.

At first I tried to override my son's agency with my prayers. Finally understanding that no amount of pleading could *make* our son come back, I began to pray that he would receive the experiences he needed to help him *want* to come back. I believe that even with his illness, our son has some ability to choose for himself. My husband and I came to realize that we needed to learn to control our own feelings, attitudes, and reactions to his choices.

While our son is often not open to gospel discussions, I have found other ways to bear my testimony to him. I have made our home a place of "silent sermons." On our walls hang cross-stitched scriptures and framed pictures of the Savior and temples. I once noticed my son studying one of these pictures. Whenever he comes home, he is reminded of our faith without our saying a word.

Finding Hope

Throughout this long ordeal, the scriptures have helped me to endure. I have often found comfort by reading that the sons of Mosiah were the "vilest of sinners" ([Mosiah 28:4](#)), yet through repentance were totally forgiven and became great missionaries. When I read about Jesus Christ calling forth those with *any manner* of afflictions to be healed (see [3 Ne. 17:7-9](#)), I find comfort in the thought that He can heal today just as He healed then.

One day I was dusting a framed saying that I had purchased for my son when he was a child. It described the meaning of his name, accompanied by an appropriate scripture. Although I had read it many times before, the scripture suddenly had new meaning. It said: "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me. ... The Lord shall deliver me ... and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" ([2 Tim. 4:17-18](#)). The Lord is mindful of our son, from day to day, and when our son is ready, the Lord has the power to help him overcome his addictions. A warm feeling came over me as I realized that the Savior was indeed watching over him.

Living with our son's mental illness and substance abuse has not been easy, but through my experiences, I have come to know and love my Savior more deeply. I have found that the only way to find true peace and happiness is by putting my trust in Him. I have come to know that eventually—whether in this life or in the eternities—my son will find the same peace in the gospel that I have found. My testimony of the Savior and the power of His atoning sacrifice increases daily. The Savior suffered for my sins. He suffered for my son's sins. And I believe that one day, through His sacrifice and His love, our son will return to the teachings of his youth.

More on this topic: See John K. Carmack, "[When Our Children Go Astray](#)," Ensign, Feb. 1997, 6; Jan Underwood Pinborough, "[Mental Illness: In Search of Understanding and Hope](#)," Ensign, Feb. 1989, 50; "[When Children Rebel](#)," Ensign, Mar. 1985, 30; Marvin K. Gardner, "[Keeping the Door Open and the Stew Hot: Loving and Helping a Wayward Child](#)," Ensign, Aug. 1982, 8. "Letting Go without Giving Up," Ensign, Sep 2002, 8

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Kent and Marie (names have been changed) sat in their bishop's office, trying to figure out what to do with their 20-year-old daughter. She had been in a drug treatment program two years before and had seemed to be making progress. She had even been attending a singles ward nearby. But her parents had just received a phone call from the local jail and learned she'd been arrested for "driving under the influence." Tests showed that she was not only legally drunk but also high on methamphetamine—a potentially lethal combination. They were terrified that her next episode would be fatal.

Kent and Marie's story is not unique. There is perhaps no greater anguish than that which results from seeing a family member make choices that could result in alienation from God and a descent into darkness.

When a family member is addicted to alcohol or drugs, the whole family must deal with the situation. Douglas LeCheminant, program specialist for LDS Family Services, has four suggestions for family members trying to help their loved ones without losing their own spiritual moorings: allow consequences to occur, turn to the Church, extend love, and rely on the Lord.

Allow Consequences to Occur

According to Brian Whipple, a senior therapist for the Central Utah Counseling Center, family members and friends often mistakenly think that if they love someone who is addicted to drugs, they should rescue that individual from the consequences of the addiction. Their behavior "lets the addict continue to use," says Brother Whipple. For example, a family member might make excuses for the loved one's behavior, assume his or her responsibilities, even bail the loved one out of jail. But, says Brother Whipple, "The secret is to love the person without condoning the addiction."

One recovering alcoholic said his wife did not try to lessen the effects of his addictive behavior: "When I was too hung over to go to work, she didn't call in sick for me. She let me face my boss's anger and figure out how to keep my job. She'd leave the house and go to a hotel or to her cousin's, and she didn't come back until I'd cleaned up my messes myself." He credits her actions with motivating him to get treatment for his problem. [1](#)

Another man described how his wife responded to his alcoholism: "She never told me I couldn't drink, but she also never lessened the consequences when I did. She never poured out my alcohol. She never yelled at me. She never came to my rescue. All of her actions and words faithfully affirmed that *she believed* I was going to get well." With his wife's support, this man eventually was able to stop his addictive behavior. [2](#)

Turn to the Church

Family members may feel embarrassed or ashamed that their loved one is struggling with an addiction, and they may think they should handle the problem privately. However, outside help may be needed. A family should use any appropriate resources

that are available to them, such as professional resources where necessary. Their bishop or branch president can also help. He can give inspired counsel about spiritual matters and can refer them to Church resources, including LDS Family Services, when needed.

LDS Family Services sponsors an addiction recovery program in many locations throughout the United States and Canada, with plans for implementation in other areas. In places where LDS Family Services does not operate, bishops can refer members to counselors or programs with values that are supportive of LDS principles and standards.

Extend Love

Family members will find that love is more effective than shame or control in motivating addicts to change, says Brother LeCheminant. If addicts feel shame—in other words, if they feel that they are inherently bad or unworthy because of their addiction—they may turn to alcohol or drugs to help dull the pain associated with that shame. Christlike love, on the other hand, can give an addict hope and can help change the most desperate situation. But love doesn't mean acceptance of sinful behavior.

A father whose son finally repented, learned how to stop his addictive behavior, and came back into full Church fellowship after 15 years said: "For a long time I didn't even know where [my son] was. When he would finally get in touch with us, I had to bite my tongue to keep from yelling at him. But one thing I always did was to tell him I loved him and that I wanted him with me forever. When the light finally came on and he invited us to his rebaptism, I tasted just a little of what I believe Heavenly Father must feel for us."

A mother who grieved for years about her daughter's addictions encouraged other parents to "never, never give up." She said: "I prayed every day for [my daughter]. I prayed for a mighty miracle like Alma's or Paul's. But nothing really happened for a long time—I just felt a calmness, and the knot in my stomach loosened. Maybe the miracle wasn't anything spectacular, but it was a miracle. I always loved her, and I always knew that she'd eventually come back."

Rely on the Lord

The Savior understands the challenges and struggles faced not only by those who find themselves in the nightmare world of addiction but by family members and friends who share that world (see [Alma 7:11–12](#)). Through the power of the Atonement, He can help family members bear seemingly unbearable situations, such as when a loved one appears to give up and there seems to be nothing the family can do, other than rely on the Lord.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the following counsel to those suffering from trials: "No matter what the source of difficulty and no matter how you begin to obtain relief—through a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood

leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one—no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments.” [3](#)

Family members can help their addicted loved ones by keeping their own spiritual reservoirs filled. Daily scripture study, consistent attendance at Church meetings, frequent prayer, and reliance upon the Atonement can help give them the strength they need to face their challenges.

Hang on to Hope

When hope seems lost, when the very jaws of hell seem to gape after us (see [D&C 122:7](#)), we can be secure in the knowledge that Christ’s love is eternal and everlasting. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: “[The Lord] knows our bearing capacities. Though we ourselves may feel pushed to the breaking point, ere long, thanks to Him, these once-daunting challenges become receding milestones.” [4](#)

We can trust that the Savior is mindful of our struggles: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” ([Isa. 53:4](#)). There are no easy solutions to the problem of addiction. But with faith we can endure all of our challenges, knowing that if we will seek the Lord’s guidance, He will stand by us and strengthen us.

The Process of Addiction

Therapists have identified three stages of addiction. Understanding these stages can help you recognize if your loved one is struggling with an addiction problem.

First stage. This starts when individuals discover that drugs or alcohol bring pleasure or a “high.” When the effects of the substance wear off, the users usually return to normal without evidence of harm.

People in this first stage often believe nothing is wrong with their behavior. They likely have been lectured about the consequences of drug use, and when they don’t experience adverse effects, they may think the warnings are exaggerated. They begin to rationalize, and although they may experience guilt from breaking a commandment, the guilt often lessens as the disobedience continues.

The first stage can last for years, with casual users maintaining control but choosing to continue indulging. People in this stage may say things like, “What’s the big deal? One drink won’t hurt me,” or “I’ve had a terrible day—these leftover painkillers will help me relax.”

Second stage. This stage starts when users develop a tolerance for the substance. To experience a high, they need more and more of the drug. As use escalates, guilt

typically escalates because they are devoting more time and energy to getting and using their substance. Their behavior changes; they may become irritable, secretive, and dishonest. Their spirituality decreases, and they may go to great lengths to deny they are being disobedient. It is common during this stage for family members and others to suspect a substance abuse problem.

Third stage. The last stage of addiction begins as users experience more pain and are unable to reach the high they were once able to achieve. Worse, they experience discomfort and pain when they don't use the substance. They feel they must have it to function. At this stage they have developed an addiction that cannot be overcome through willpower alone, and they must seek outside help.

(See Hidden Treasures Institute, *Hold On to Hope: Help for LDS Addicts and Their Families*, 3rd ed. [1996], 3–15; Colleen C. Harrison, *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*, rev. ed. [2003].)

For more information on LDS Family Services as well as links to articles on substance abuse, see the Church Web site www.ldsfamilyservices.org.

Notes

1. Unless stated otherwise, all quotations are from interviews conducted by the author.
2. See Phil S. [no last name given], *The Perfect Brightness of Hope* (2002), 98.
3. "To Be Healed," *Ensign*, May 1994, 9.
4. "The Precious Promise," *Ensign*, Apr. 2004, 45.

Notes

Corrie Lynne Player is a member of the Cedarview Ward, Cedar City Utah West Stake.

The entire March 2010 edition of the Ensign was very helpful to me.

Paul V. Johnson, "Lessons from the New Testament: 'My Burden Is Light'," *Ensign*, Mar 2007, 54–56



One of the Savior's most comforting promises is found in [Matthew 11:28–30](#):

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The Thatcher family felt the comfort of that promise during a particularly difficult time.

During October 2003, Aaron and Lorraine Thatcher's two little daughters, 17-month-old Kaitlin and 6-month-old Madelyn, were diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. Shortly before the unexpected diagnosis, Aaron had to be hospitalized with kidney stones. Lorraine, meanwhile, was expecting their third child and was battling morning sickness. It was a heavy, dark time for the little family. Lorraine commented, "It was as if all our hopes and dreams for our children had been stolen away."

Because of Aaron's and Lorraine's poor health, Aaron's mother spent nights in the hospital with the little girls. Lorraine would make her way to the hospital whenever her intense nausea abated. It all seemed impossible to handle. The little girls needed the comfort of their mother, and she was unable to be there at all times. The sorrow and guilt she felt only added to the heavy burden of coping with the new changes in her family's lives.

Around noon one day she dragged herself to her car, sick, exhausted, and full of anxiety. As she headed toward the hospital, she turned on some soothing music and listened to the words of her favorite hymn—a hymn that had comforted her in the past when her mother had died. As the music surrounded her, it was as if the Lord were speaking the penetrating words directly to her mind and heart:

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, ...
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

*When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, ...
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.*

*When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design ...
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine. ...*

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, ...
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!*
(“How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85)

A short time later, Aaron and Lorraine brought their daughters home. Relief Society sisters had cleaned the house, done the wash, and filled the kitchen with food. Aaron and Lorraine felt the peacefulness of the clean home as they entered.

A package had been left on their doorstep. Opening it, they found a beautifully framed picture of the Savior. Typed and mounted with the picture were the words to the hymn that had been such a direct, personal message of peace to Lorraine. A sister in the ward, thinking the message was appropriate for this little family, had thoughtfully made the gift. She had no idea that these words had special meaning to Lorraine. Lorraine felt the Spirit gently confirm that the Lord loved her, was aware of her, and would help lift her burdens.

Each of us faces challenging trials at times in our lives. Each of us also has access to the power of the Atonement to help us through difficult times and to bring peace and joy into our lives. Sometimes the help comes by removal of the burden. Many times the promised rest and peace come into our lives even though the burden is still present.

At one point in the Book of Mormon, the people of Alma were in bondage and afflicted with heavy burdens. Because of their faith in the Lord, “the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” ([Mosiah 24:15](#)).

Many people can testify that the Lord has given them strength to “bear up their burdens with ease.” We all have met people who are happy even though they face tremendous hardships. By coming unto the Savior, they have found His promised peace.

The Apostle Paul suffered with an unnamed problem he described as “a thorn in the flesh” ([2 Corinthians 12:7](#)). This infirmity was not taken away even after he petitioned the Lord, but his faith is manifest in his declaration:

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” ([2 Corinthians 12:8–10](#)).

During the Last Supper the Savior told His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” ([John 14:27](#)). The peace and joy found through the Savior and the Atonement is individual and personal. It can be difficult to describe to others, but it is powerful and life changing. The Apostle Paul describes it as “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” ([Philippians 4:7](#)). This peace is available to each of us, whatever our burdens, if we will make the choice to come unto Him.

“Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.” ~ Aurelius Augustinus