

Many families struggle with wayward children. We can take comfort in “the eternal sealings of faithful parents” which will draw children “back to the fold” (Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110). We must never give up loving them, praying for them, and trusting in our Heavenly Father’s care.

So to my daughter, and to all young people in the Church, as you make the transition to this new phase in your life,

I tell you these things. I testify that in the eternal scheme of things, the most crucial and fulfilling thing you will do is to build a holy home and rear a strong family in love. This family unit will bless society and endure through eternity. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Come, Rejoice.”

Elder Richard G. Scott

The sustaining power of faith

Who does not have need of assurance in times of uncertainty and testing? Who is so self-confident that there is never want for a stabilizing influence in life? A fundamental purpose of earth life is personal growth and attainment. Consequently, there must be times of trial and quandary to provide opportunity for that development. What child could ever grow to be self-supporting in maturity if all the critical decisions were made by parents? So it is with our Heavenly Father. His plan of happiness is conceived so that we will have challenges, even difficulties, where decisions of great importance must be made so that we can grow, develop, and succeed in this mortal probation.¹ Gratefully, in His perfect love, He has provided a way for us to resolve those challenges while growing in strength and capacity. I speak of the sustaining power of faith in times of uncertainty and testing.

God has given us the capacity to exercise faith so we may find peace, joy, and purpose in life. However, if we are to employ its power, faith must be founded on something. There is no more solid foundation than faith in the love Heavenly Father has for you, faith in His plan of happiness, and faith in the capacity and willingness of Jesus Christ to fulfill all of His promises.

Comparison with nuclear particles

For some, faith is not understood and consequently not used to full advantage. Some feel that any discussion of religion and the guidance one can receive through robust faith have no rational basis. However, faith is not illusion nor magic but a power rooted in eternal principles. Are you one who has tried to exercise faith and has felt no benefit? If so, you likely have not understood and followed the principles upon which faith is founded. An example will illustrate what I mean.

Years ago I participated in the measurement of the nuclear characteristics of different materials. The process used an experimental nuclear reactor designed so that high-energy particles streamed from a hole in the center of the reactor. These particles were directed into an experimental chamber where measurements were made. The high-energy particles could not be seen, but they had to be carefully controlled to avoid harm to others.

One day a janitor entered while we were experimenting. In a spirit of disgust he said, “You are all liars, pretending that you are doing something important, but you can’t fool me. I know that if you can’t see, hear, taste, smell, or touch something, it doesn’t exist.” That attitude ruled out the possibility of his learning that there is

much of worth that can't be identified by the five senses. Had that man been willing to open his mind to understand how the presence of nuclear particles is detected, he would have confirmed their existence. In like manner, never doubt the reality of faith.

Principles for exercising faith

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 when answers come a piece at a time over an extended period.

Motivating faith is centered in trust in the Lord and in His willingness to answer your needs. For “the Lord . . . doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.”² The consistent, willing exercise of faith increases your confidence and ability to employ the power of faith.

Pattern for strengthening faith

You can learn to use faith more effectively by applying this principle taught by Moroni: “Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the *trial of your faith*.³” Thus, every time you *try your faith*—that is, act in worthiness on an impression—you will receive the confirming evidence of the Spirit. Those feelings will fortify your faith. As you repeat that pattern, your faith will become stronger.

The Lord knows your needs. When you ask with honesty and real intent, He

will prompt you to do that which will increase your ability to act in faith. With consistent practice, faith will become a vibrant, powerful, uplifting, inspiring force in your life. As you walk to the boundary of your understanding into the twilight of uncertainty, exercising faith, you will be led to find solutions you would not obtain otherwise. I testify that I know that is true.

Faith is accepting of God's will

Even if you exercise your strongest faith, God will not always reward you immediately according to your desires. Rather, God will respond with what in His eternal plan is best for you. He loves you to a depth and completeness you cannot conceive of in your mortal state. Indeed, were you to know His entire plan, you would never ask for that which is contrary to it even though your feelings tempt you to do so. Sincere faith gives us understanding and strength to accept the will of our Heavenly Father when it differs from our own. We can accept His will with peace and assurance, confident that His infinite wisdom surpasses our own ability to comprehend fully His plan as it unfolds a piece at a time.

Faith is not just push a button and you get the answer. The Lord declared, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”⁴ Brigham Young observed, “God never bestows upon his people, or upon an individual, superior blessings without a severe trial to prove them.”⁵ Personally, for some vital decisions I have experienced the grueling, anguishing struggle that precedes a confirming answer. Yet those trying experiences have been edifying. It is comforting to know that God will never try you more than you can manage with His help.

Faith forges strength of character

God uses your faith to mold your character. Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming. Strong moral

character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Your faith can guide you to those correct choices. Clearly, it is what you do and what you think about that determine what you are and what you will become. Therefore, the choices you make need to be inspired by the Lord. Others can encourage you to make the right decisions, but those choices must not be prescribed by them. You need to ponder, pray, and exercise faith to willingly make choices consistent with the teachings of the Master. Such choices are made with trust in things that are believed and when acted upon will be confirmed. Only enough guidance is given to lead you aright and not to weaken your growing character. That guidance will solidify your trust in Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Faith will forge strength of character available to you in times of urgent need. Such character is not developed in moments of great challenge or temptation. That is when it is used. Character is woven patiently from threads of principle, doctrine, and obedience. In James we read: "The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."⁶

Character expands capacity for faith

The bedrock of character is integrity. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to respond obediently to the direction of the Spirit. Righteous character is what you are becoming. It is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. It allows you to be trusted. Righteous character provides the foundation of spiritual strength. It enables you in times of trial and testing to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly even when they seem overpowering. I testify that neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing char-

acter. Only you could do that through disobedience.

Our Father's plan is marvelous. Your exercise of faith builds character. Fortified character expands your capacity to exercise faith. Thus, your confidence in conquering the trials of life is enhanced. And the strengthening cycle continues. The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to exercise the power of faith.

The axiom "You get what you pay for" is true for spiritual rewards as well. You get what you pay for in obedience, in faith in Jesus Christ, in diligent application of the truths that you learn. What you get is the molding of your character, with growth in capacity, and the successful completion of your purpose here on earth—to grow through being proven.

God's perfect love is our source of peace

No matter what occurs, no matter how topsy-turvy the world becomes, you can always have the sustaining power of faith. That will never change. The perfect love of your Father in Heaven will never change. His gospel plan gives life meaning and can ensure your happiness. His plan is not only to prove you here on earth but also that you may receive the growth that comes from correct decisions prompted by faith, enabled by your obedience.

Why worry about future calamities or uncertainties over which you have no control? Your righteous character magnifies the probability that you will never have to suffer them. When challenges and testing do come, your faith will lead you to solutions. 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. Right will ultimately prevail. It will yield blessings now as you in faith obey the commandments of God.

Remember, an unfailing, continual, ever-present source of peace and comfort

is available to you. It is the certainty that your Father in Heaven loves you no matter what your circumstance, no matter what winds of trial, turmoil, or tribulation whirl about you. That certainty will never change. Your ability to access that support depends on the strength of your faith in Him and in His certain willingness to bless you.

I testify that faith in God and in His guidance through the Holy Spirit will sustain you in an increasingly more challenging world. I testify that the application of the principles we have reviewed will help you avail yourself of the sustaining power of faith in times of uncertainty and testing.

There are many around you who are confused and are seeking solutions to life's perplexing problems. Share your testimony of truth and the power of faith with them. Help them understand how faith in God and in His teachings, restored in their fulness in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, can bless their lives now, in these turbulent times. Testify of the power of the Lord to bless their lives. Do it now. The Lord will help you. Your faith will guide you and sustain you. I know it will. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Revelation 3:19.
2. Helaman 12:1; see also Proverbs 3:5–6.
3. Ether 12:6; italics added.
4. Revelation 3:19.
5. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 338.
6. James 1:3–4.

The choir sang “The Morning Breaks.”

President Monson

As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved president and prophet, will now speak to us. Following his remarks, the session will conclude with the choir singing “He Watching over Israel.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Dale E. Miller of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

War and peace

My brethren and sisters, last Sunday as I sat in my study thinking of what I might say on this occasion, I received a phone call telling me that Staff Sergeant James W. Cawley of the U.S. Marines had been killed somewhere in Iraq. He was 41 years of age, leaving behind a wife and two small children.

Twenty years ago Elder Cawley was a missionary of the Church in Japan. Like so many others, he had grown up in the Church, had played as a schoolboy, had

passed the sacrament as a deacon, and had been found worthy to serve a mission to teach the gospel of peace to the people of Japan. He returned home, served in the Marines, married, became a policeman, and was then recalled to active military duty, to which he responded without hesitation.

His life, his mission, his military service, his death seem to represent the contradictions of the peace of the gospel and the tides of war.

And so I venture to say something about the war and the gospel we teach.