

## Fear Not: Believe Only!

# Fear Not: Believe Only!

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Begin your search for happiness by embracing the bounty we have already received from the giver of every good gift.

I direct my remarks today to the young people of the Church, meaning anyone President Russell M. Nelson's age or younger. I seldom use visuals, but I can't resist sharing this one.

This *cri de couer* comes from my eight-year-old friend Marin Arnold, written when she was seven. I will translate for you her early reformed Egyptian:

Dear Bishop  
generle confrins  
was Boring why  
Do we half to  
Do it? tell me why  
Sinslerlie, Marin  
Arnold.<sup>1</sup>

Well, Marin, the talk I am about to give will undoubtedly disappoint you again. But when you write your bishop to complain, it is important that you tell him my name is "Kearon. Elder Patrick Kearon."

For nearly two years a pandemic of biblical proportions has enveloped our planet, and while that plague brought a halt to almost everything socially, obviously it did not bring a halt to brutality, violence, and cruel aggression politically—nationally or internationally. As if that were not enough, we are still facing long-standing social and cultural challenges, ranging from economic deprivation to environmental desecration to racial inequity and more.

Such stiff winds and dark days can be discouraging to the youth among us, those to whom we look for optimism and enthusiasm regarding the tomorrows of our lives. It has been said that "the power of youth is the common wealth for the entire world. The ... young ... are the faces of our ... future."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, our children are the trustees into whose hands the destiny of this Church will be placed.

Given our current times, it is understandable if the idealism of the young is waning a little. Dr. Laurie Santos, a professor at Yale University, recently created a class titled Psychology and the Good Life. “The first year the class was offered, nearly [one-quarter] of the [entire] undergraduate student body enrolled.”<sup>3</sup> Over 64 million people then visited her podcast. Writing about this phenomenon, one journalist noted how painful it is to see so many bright, young students—and adults—desperately “looking for something they’ve lost” or, worse yet, longing for something they never had.<sup>4</sup>

My plea today to our youth, and to you parents and adults who advise them, is to begin your search for happiness by embracing the bounty we have already received from the giver of every good gift.<sup>5</sup> At precisely the moment many in the world are asking deep questions of the soul, we ought to be answering with the “good news”<sup>6</sup> of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which holds aloft the mission and message of the Savior of the world, offers the most eternally significant way to both find good and do good at such a needful time.

President Russell M. Nelson has said that this generation of young people has the capacity to have “more impact [for good] on the world than any previous generation.”<sup>7</sup> We, of all people, should be “sing[ing] the song of redeeming love,”<sup>8</sup> but that takes discipline—“discipleship,” if you will—the kind that guards against negative attitudes and destructive habits that would pull us off-key as we try to sing that song of eternal salvation.

Even as we stay “on the sunny side of the street,”<sup>9</sup> we do run into that fellow from time to time who is determined to find something bleak and dismal about everything. You know his motto: “It is always darkest just before it goes pitch-black.” What a malignant vision, and what a miserable existence! Yes, we might sometimes want to run away from where we are, but we certainly should never run away from who we are—children of the living God who loves us, who is always ready to forgive us, and who will never, ever forsake us. You are His most precious possession. You are His child, to whom He has given prophets and promises, spiritual gifts and revelations, miracles and messages, and angels on both sides of the veil.<sup>10</sup>

He has also given you a church that strengthens families for mortality and binds them together for eternity. It provides more than 31,000 wards and branches where people gather and sing and fast and pray for each other and give of their means to the poor. This is where every person is named, accounted for, and ministered to and where lay friends and neighbors voluntarily serve each other in callings that range from clerical work to custodial duty. Young adults—and senior couples as well—serve missions by the thousands at their own expense with no say whatsoever as to where they will labor, and members young and old trundle off to temples to perform sacred ordinances necessary to bind the human family together—a bold activity in such a divided world but one which declares that such divisiveness is only temporary. These are a few of the reasons we give for “the hope that is in [us].”<sup>11</sup>

Of course, in our present day, tremendously difficult issues face any disciple of Jesus Christ. The leaders of this Church are giving their lives to seeking the Lord's guidance in the resolution of these challenges. If some are *not* resolved to the satisfaction of everyone, perhaps they constitute part of the cross Jesus said we would have to take up in order to follow Him.<sup>12</sup> It is precisely because there would be dark days and difficult issues that God promised He would, out of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, guide prophets, give an iron rod, open a narrow gate leading to a strait path, and above all grant us the power to finish the course.<sup>13</sup>

So please, please, stay for the whole feast even if you are not sure about the broccoli. Bask in *His* light and lend *your* candle to the cause.<sup>14</sup> They have it right in Primary: Jesus really *does* “[want you] for a sunbeam.”<sup>15</sup>

When the Jewish leader Jairus pled for Jesus to heal his 12-year-old daughter, who lay dying at home, the surrounding crowd waylaid the Savior so long that a servant soon came saying to this anxious father, “Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.”

“But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.”<sup>16</sup>

And she was. And so will you. “Fear not: believe only.”

Because each of you in this audience is precious to God and to this Church, I close with this special apostolic declaration. Before you ever received the gift of the Holy Ghost, you had the Light of Christ planted in your soul,<sup>17</sup> that “light which is in all things, ... giveth life to all things,”<sup>18</sup> and is the influence for good in the hearts of all people who have ever lived or ever will live. That light was given to protect you and teach you. One of its central messages is that life is the most precious of all gifts, a gift which is obtained eternally only through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Light and Life of the World,<sup>19</sup> the Only Begotten Son of God came to give us life by conquering death.

We must commit ourselves fully to that gift of life and run to the aid of those who are at risk of giving up this sacred gift. Leaders, advisers, friends, family—watch for signs of depression, despair, or anything hinting of self-harm. Offer your help. Listen. Make some kind of intervention as appropriate.

To any of our youth out there who are struggling, whatever your concerns or difficulties, death by suicide is manifestly *not* the answer. It will not relieve the pain you are feeling or that you think you are causing. In a world that so desperately needs all the light it can get, please do *not* minimize the eternal light God put in *your* soul before this world was. Talk to someone. Ask for help. Do *not* destroy a life that Christ gave *His* life to preserve. You can bear the struggles of this mortal life because we will help you bear them. You are stronger than you think. Help *is* available, from others and especially from God. You are loved and valued and needed. We need you! “Fear not: believe only.”

Someone who faced circumstances far more desperate than you and I ever will once cried: “Go forward [my beloved young friends]. Courage, ... and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad.”<sup>20</sup> We have so much to be glad about. We have each other, and we have Him. Don’t deny us the chance to have you, I plead, in the sacred and holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master, amen.

## Notes

1. Marin Arnold, in email to Jeffrey R. Holland, Feb. 11, 2022, used with permission.
2. Kailash Satyarthi, in “Thoughts on Being Young,” *Forbes India*, Feb. 25, 2021, forbesindia.com.
3. David Marchese, “Yale’s Happiness Professor Says Anxiety Is Destroying Her Students,” *New York Times Magazine*, Feb. 18, 2022, nytimes.com.
4. David Marchese, “Yale’s Happiness Professor Says Anxiety Is Destroying Her Students.”
5. See James 1:17; see also Moroni 10:5–20.
6. Bible Dictionary, “Gospels.”
7. Russell M. Nelson, “A Personal Invitation to Participate in Seminary and Institute,” Feb. 4, 2019, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
8. Alma 5:26.
9. This phrase is taken from a 1930s popular jazz song titled “On the Sunny Side of the Street,” with lyrics by Dorothy Fields (see “On the Sunny Side of the Street,” Jazz Standards, jazzstandards.com).
10. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Ministry of Angels,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 29–31.
11. 1 Peter 3:15.
12. See Matthew 16:24; Mark 10:21; Luke 9:23.
13. See, for example, Exodus 13:21–22; Amos 3:7; 1 Nephi 8:24, 30; 2 Nephi 9:41.
14. See Matthew 5:15–16; 3 Nephi 12:15–16.
15. “Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam,” *Children’s Songbook*, 60–61.
16. Luke 8:49–50; see also verses 41–42, 51–56.
17. See John 1:9; Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 88:13; see also verses 6–12.
19. See Mosiah 16:9; 3 Nephi 9:18; 11:11; Ether 4:12; see also John 8:12.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.