

Wholehearted

By Sister Michelle D. Craig

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

We should be followers of Jesus who are joyful and wholehearted in our own personal journey of discipleship.

Sometimes, it helps to know what to expect.

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus told His Apostles that hard times would come. But He also said, “See that ye be not troubled.”¹ Yes, He would leave, but He would not leave them alone.² He would send His Spirit to help them remember, stand fast, and find peace. The Savior fulfills His promise to be with us, His disciples, but we must continually look to Him to help us recognize and enjoy His presence.

Christ’s disciples have always encountered hard times.

A dear friend of mine sent me an old article from the *Nebraska Advertiser*, a Midwestern United States newspaper, dated July 9, 1857. It read: “This morning early a company of Mormons passed through on their journey to Salt Lake. Women (not very delicate to be sure) dragging hand carts like beasts, one [woman] tumbled down in this black mud which caused a slight halt in the procession, little children trudged along in their [strange] foreign dress looking as determined as their mothers.”³

I’ve thought a lot about this mud-drenched woman. Why was she pulling alone? Was she a single mother? What gave her the inner strength, the grit, the perseverance to make such a wrenching journey through mud, pulling all her possessions in a handcart to an unknown desert home—at times being mocked by observers?⁴

President Joseph F. Smith spoke of the inner strength of these pioneer women, saying: “Could you turn one of these women away from their convictions in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Could you darken their minds as to the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith? Could you blind them with reference to the divine mission of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? No, never in the world could you do it. Why? Because they knew it. God revealed it to them, and they understood it, and no power on earth could turn them from what they knew to be that truth.”⁵

Brothers and sisters, to be such men and women is the call of our day—disciples who dig deep to find the strength to keep pulling when called to walk through the wilderness, disciples with convictions that have been revealed to us by God, followers of Jesus who are joyful and wholehearted in our own personal journey of discipleship. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we believe and can grow in three important truths.

First, We Can Keep Our Covenants, Even When It Is Not Easy

When your faith, your family, or your future are challenged—when you wonder why life is so hard when you are doing your best to live the gospel—remember that the Lord told us to expect troubles. Troubles are part of the plan and do not mean you’ve been abandoned; they are part of what it means to be His.⁶ He was, after all, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”⁷

I am learning that Heavenly Father is more interested in my *growth* as a disciple of Jesus Christ than He is with my *comfort*. I may not always want it to be that way—but it is!

Living in convenience does not bring power. The power we need to withstand the heat of our day is the *Lord’s* power, and His power flows through our covenants with Him.⁸ To lean in with our faith when facing strong headwinds—to sincerely strive each day to *do* what we covenanted with the Savior we would *do*, even and especially when we are tired, worried, and wrestling with troubling questions and issues—is to gradually receive His light, His strength, His love, His Spirit, His peace.

The point of walking the covenant path is to approach the Savior. *He* is the point, not our perfect progress. It is not a race, and we must not compare our journey to others’. Even when we stumble, He is there.

Second, We Can Act in Faith

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we understand that faith in Him requires action—especially in hard times.⁹

Many years ago, my parents decided to recarpet the house. The night before the new carpet arrived, my mom asked my brothers to remove furniture and rip out bedroom carpets so the new carpet could be installed. My then seven-year-old sister, Emily, was already asleep. So, while she slept, they quietly removed all the furniture from her room, except the bed, and then tore out the carpet. Well, like older brothers

sometimes do, they decided to pull a prank. They removed the rest of her belongings from the closet and off the walls, leaving the room bare. Then they wrote a note and tacked it to the wall: “Dear Emily, we moved. We’ll write in a few days and tell you where we are. Love, your family.”

The next morning when Emily did not come for breakfast, my brothers went to find her—there she was, sad and alone behind a closed door. Emily reflected on this experience later: “I was crushed. But what would have happened if I had just opened the door? What would I have heard? What would I have smelled? I would have known I was not alone. I would have known I really was loved. The thought never even crossed my mind to do something about my situation. I just gave up and stayed in my closet crying. And yet if I had simply opened the door.”¹⁰

My sister made an assumption based on what she saw, but it wasn’t a reflection of the way things actually were. Isn’t it interesting that we, like Emily, can become so weighed down in sadness or hurt or discouragement or worry or loneliness or anger or frustration that it doesn’t even occur to us to simply do something, to open the door, to act with faith in Jesus Christ?

The scriptures are filled with examples of men and women, disciples of Christ, who, when facing the impossible, simply acted—who got up in faith and walked.¹¹

To lepers who sought healing, Christ said: “Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, *as they went*, they were cleansed.”¹²

They went to show themselves to the priests as if they had already been healed, and in the process of acting, they were.

I also want to say if the thought of taking action amid your pain feels impossible, please let your action be to reach out for help—to a friend, a family member, a Church leader, a professional. This can be a first step to hope.

Third, We Can Be Wholehearted and Joyful in Our Devotion¹³

When hard times come, I try to remember that I chose to follow Christ before I came to earth and that challenges to my faith, my health, and my endurance are all part of the reason I’m here. And I certainly should never think that today’s trial calls into question God’s love for me or let it turn my faith in Him into doubt. Trials do not mean that the plan is failing; they are part of the plan meant to help me seek God. I become

more like Him when I endure patiently, and hopefully, like Him, when in agony, I pray more earnestly.¹⁴

Jesus Christ was the perfect example of loving our Father with all His heart—of doing His will, regardless of the cost.¹⁵ I want to follow His example by doing the same.

I am inspired by the wholehearted, whole-souled discipleship of the widow who threw her two mites into the temple treasury. She gave her all.¹⁶

Jesus Christ recognized the abundance of her all where others saw only her lack. The same is true with each of us. He doesn't see our lack as failure but rather as an opportunity to exercise faith and to grow.

Conclusion

My fellow disciples of Jesus Christ, with all my heart, I choose to stand with the Lord. I choose to stand with His chosen servants—President Russell M. Nelson and his fellow Apostles—for they speak for Him and are the stewards of the ordinances and covenants that tie me to the Savior.

When I stumble, I will keep getting up, relying on the grace and enabling power of Jesus Christ. I will stay in my covenant with Him and work through my questions by study of God's word, by faith, and with the help of the Holy Ghost, whose guidance I trust. I will seek His Spirit every day by doing the small and simple things.

This is my path of discipleship.

And until the day that the everyday wounds of mortality are healed, I will wait upon the Lord and trust Him—His timing, His wisdom, His plan.¹⁷

Arm in arm with you, I want to stand with Him forever. Wholehearted. Knowing that when we love Jesus Christ with all our hearts, He gives us all in return.¹⁸ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Matthew 24:6.
2. See Matthew 24:13; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:11; see also Matthew 28:19–20; John 14:18.
3. Netty Penwood, “Leaves from My Iowa Log Book,” *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 9, 1857, 1, newspapers.com/clip/60679566/pioneers-trek-to-the-salt-lake-valley/.
4. See 1 Nephi 8:27.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 189.
6. See John 16:33; Revelation 7:13–17; Abraham 3:25.
7. Isaiah 53:3.
8. See M. Russell Ballard, “Like a Flame Unquenchable,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 86; *Liahona*, July 1999, 102.
9. See Bible Dictionary, “Faith.”
10. Personal correspondence.
11. See Joshua 3:5, 13, 15–17; 2 Kings 5:14; Matthew 14:29; Mark 2:3–5; Luke 8:43–44; John 2:3–5; Acts 11:12; 1 Nephi 4:6–7; 16:23; 3 Nephi 27:21; Ether 2:16; 3; Moses 6:32, 42.
12. Luke 17:14; emphasis added; see also verses 11–13.
13. “When the focus of our lives is on ... Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives” (President Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82).
14. See Luke 22:44.
15. See Matthew 26:39, 42, 44.
16. See Mark 12:41–44.
17. See Isaiah 40:31.
18. See Romans 8:14–18, 28, 38–39.