

“Trusting in the Lord’s Timetable”

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“My words are sure and shall not fail.... But all things must come to pass in their time” (D&C 64:31–32). We need to trust in the Lord’s timetable not only for ourselves but others as well. The Lord is the master planner. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ prepares us for whatever life brings. ... Wise are those who make this commitment: I will put the Lord first in my life and I will keep His commandments.”

How do we learn to have more faith in the Lord and in His timing? How does putting the Lord first in our lives help us keep an eternal perspective about His timing?

“My words are sure and shall not fail... But all things must come to pass in their time” (D&C 64:31–32). I love being reminded that the Lord is constant and that if we are faithful all blessings will eventually be ours. Over time I have learned that each one of us deals with the challenge of trusting in the Lord’s timetable—waiting for “eventually” or “in their time” to actually come. We all face different types of adversity, and all adversity has the opportunity to shape us into the people our Heavenly Father needs us to be in the eternities. The first question to ask ourselves is: When will we choose to make His plan our plan? The need for increased faith, strength and comfort amidst frustrated dreams, slow progression, failures, overwhelming illness and so many other challenges and trials is immense. The Lord’s plan includes His path for our individual, personal progression toward eternal life. We all need to increase our trust and faith to the point of giving Him our will. But how do we learn to have more faith in the Lord and in His timing? How do we keep an eternal perspective? Hopefully these thoughts and ideas will resonate with you and inspire you to look upward more often for direction and peace.

CHOOSE TO PUT THE LORD FIRST

I am a self-motivated person. Not long ago I saw a T-shirt that had six-inch words stacked on top of each other saying “Make Your Self,” and I didn’t hesitate to add it to my collection. To me it was I great reminder that I choose who I want to be; I can make myself into anything. “Making myself” is about making conscious choices for the priorities in my life. I want to “make myself,” or choose to do more, to qualify for the Spirit’s direction, for strengthening from the angels

around me, and for assistance through the Atonement in reaching the celestial kingdom. To be given these blessings, I must choose to put the Lord first in my life.

Sister Julie B. Beck taught that “The ability to qualify for, receive, and act on personal revelation is the single most important skill that can be acquired in this life. Qualifying for the Lord’s Spirit begins with a desire for that Spirit and implies a certain degree of worthiness. Keeping the commandments, repenting, and renewing covenants made at baptism lead to the blessing of always having the Lord’s Spirit with us. Making and keeping temple covenants also adds spiritual strength and power to a woman’s life. Many answers to difficult questions are found by reading the scriptures because the scriptures are an aid to revelation. Insight found in scripture accumulates over time, so it is important to spend some time in the scriptures every day. Daily prayer is also essential to having the Lord’s Spirit with us” (“And upon the Handmaids in Those Days Will I Pour Out My Spirit,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 11–12). Sister Beck’s list of things to do to qualify for the Lord’s Spirit is a list of things we do when we put the Lord first in our lives. If we want to hear the Spirit’s whisperings, we must listen carefully and act on its promptings without delay. President Boyd K. Packer taught us that “It is difficult to separate from the confusion of life that quiet voice of inspiration. Unless you attune yourself, you will miss it. . . . You can train yourself to hear what you want to hear, to see and feel what you desire, but it takes some conditioning” (“Prayers and Answers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 19–20). We must make the Lord our first priority to let the Spirit help us keep an eternal perspective.

Two summers ago I hiked Mt. Whitney in California’s Sierra Nevada with friends. It’s 14,505 feet tall—the tallest mountain in the contiguous United States. If you hike the mountain in one day, you begin in the dark and end at dusk, covering 22 miles and 6,100 feet in elevation. This is an arduous hike. As we hiked the mountain in one day, we never got a very good look at the beginning and end of the trail—the trailhead was veiled in darkness. We tracked our progress by the surrounding landmarks and the trail we saw behind us. However, on the way up there were so many switchbacks, changes in landscape and fellow hikers that it was difficult to know how much ground we had covered and how much was left before we reached the summit. While physically preparing for this particular hike is important, the most important parts of the hike are staying on the trail and being aware of your progress. There are numerous ledges, slippery rocks, and even wind and lightning to watch for and avoid, as each can be perilous. Leaving the trail, the safest, most-sure path, could be deadly. One friend in our party researched the trail and knew when it was best to rest, where we should get water, what time we had to reach each landmark by to ensure our summit before the clouds brought in bad weather. We relied on his guidance. By staying on the trail and being conscious of our steps on ledges, slippery rocks, landmarks, water, and even listening for the crackle of electricity in the air, my friends and I summited and safely descended the majestic mountain, finishing the switchbacks as the sun left our sky. The trail led us up and down the mountain safely.

Just as a mountain trail provided us a safe route of travel, Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught us that the Lord will provide us with the direction we need as we strive to successfully navigate life’s trail. We are guided by the teachings of the prophets and can measure our progress by looking at our current circumstances and how far we’ve grown from our past. He said, “Remember . . . your faith covers all portions of life’s trail. [We] can have clear faith in the ultimate outcomes at the end of the trail but still find vexing uncertainties in the steps immediately ahead. The Lord

knows the end from the beginning and everything in between. [We], however, function in the muddled, mortal middle. Both the help and comfort of the Holy Ghost are thus much needed for the short run too!" ("These are Your Days," *Ensign*, Oct. 2004). Putting the Lord first in our lives by prioritizing the teachings of His servants allows us a safe route of travel through mortality. If we are to reach our summit, the celestial kingdom, safely without a detailed picture of the premortal or postmortal life, we must follow the counsel of His prophets and the guidance of the Spirit by putting the Lord first in our lives.

By putting Him first we qualify for the Lord's direction—for "continuing revelation ... the means by which the Lord administers His timing. We need that revelatory direction" (Dallin H. Oaks, "Timing," *Ensign*, Oct. 2003). It is the conscious choices of obedience covering the expanse of the gospel that facilitates an increased presence of the Spirit in our lives and a more constant eternal perspective. The veil becomes thinner as we align our lives more completely with the Savior's life by choosing to put the Lord first.

CHOOSE TO BE A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

The greatest example of everything, including putting the Lord first and keeping an eternal perspective about His timing, was the Savior, Jesus Christ. He went about His "Father's business" (Luke 2:49), "waited upon the Lord" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:24), and did the will of the Father (Luke 22:42). He was the perfect example of making the eternal purposes of God the decision-making factors in His life. The challenges and trials we are given allow us to use our agency to put the purposes of God in front of our own desires and plans. But do we? While many of our long-term plans include the eternities, with vision impaired by the veil, it is best that we look to our Savior for guidance, promptings, and direction as we make our way through mortality with small, daily choices. We too must wait upon or trust in the Lord. This requires the Christlike characteristics of "faith, patience, humility, meekness, long-suffering, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end" (Robert D. Hales, "Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011). We must choose to strengthen our faith, develop the characteristics of Christ, and live worthy of and follow the promptings of the Spirit so that we can maintain our eternal perspective—a perspective we need in today's world.

The world has big plans for each of us, and it calls to us every day—be rich, be beautiful, be sexy, be independent, be selfish, be pampered. But as women of God and disciples of Christ, we hear the call, if we listen, to be so much more. We must choose to answer the call of the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants to "lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better. ... Wherefore, lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made" (D&C 25:10, 13). I have these scriptures on my mirror in my bedroom and I *need* the strength that I receive when I read them. They are my evaluators for my day—did I choose to be about the Lord's business? Did I hold tightly to my covenants? Did I seek the celestial kingdom? I wish my answers were better than they sometimes are. Too often my responses are that I just did "a lot" that day, that I was "busy" with not much more than the work of the day. But as a true disciple and covenant woman, I need to make time to be about the Lord's business each and every day. I need to let the Spirit work through me in lifting and strengthening others, strengthening families and homes, and in increasing my own faith and personal righteousness. I need to develop more disciple characteristics. Sister Julie B. Beck taught, "Through Relief

Society we practice being disciples of Christ. We learn what He would have us learn, we do what He would have us do, and we become what He would have us become.” (“What Latter-day Saint Women Do Best: Stand Strong and Immovable,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 109). As we choose to serve in the church and strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the gospel, we have the opportunity to lift others in their trials and weaknesses. President Brigham Young said, “Let us have compassion upon each other, and let the strong tenderly nurse the weak into strength, and let those who can see guide the blind until they can see the way for themselves.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 271). Let us choose to be true disciples of Christ. Let us nurse and guide those who need us. Let us be the angels in the lives of others.

The shaping of our lives through the gospel comes through daily choices: faithful and persistent prayer, scripture study, fulfillment of callings, temple attendance, service, and obedience to the commandments of God. We can count on the Lord 100 percent of the time to fulfill His promises if we keep our covenants and choose to be His disciples. Alma taught us, “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). These “small and simple” acts will build our faith, increase our insight into the purposes of God as they unfold in our lives, strengthen our relationship with our Savior and Father in Heaven, and align our will with our Heavenly Father’s.

Last spring I took on the challenge of training for and completing an Olympic triathlon. I didn’t jump into the race by myself. I have two wonderful friends that have shown me the way, one as the competitive athlete extraordinaire and the other as a woman who is willing to do just about anything outdoors. Both of these women trained with me on bike rides, encouraged me when I wasn’t really that into the event or training for it, and most importantly they helped me conquer and find comfort in my new environment and abilities. While I give these two dear friends a lot of credit, there are so many along the way who helped me train for this huge event—from a lap-swimming buddy to a friend who agreed to do the triathlon with me to support me during the pre-race anxiety and post-race physical misery and accomplishment. Without this support group I never would have completed the event, let alone in my 2-hour, 53-minute time. I wasn’t racing to win—I was racing to show myself that I could do it. I was nervous about the open-water swim. I put my helmet on backward on the bike and held on for dear life going down “the hill” at 38 miles per hour. And my legs ached when I ran. But as a result of the preparation prior to the race, the companionship during the race, and most importantly, the knowledge that I had done enough to prepare to compete in the race in good time, I did finish. My choices and the choices of the people around me allowed me to finish and finish strong.

Just as I chose to prepare and train for the triathlon, we too must train and prepare for the challenges that will come in our lives. My body slowly strengthened through the workouts and endless efforts. Our testimonies will also slowly strengthen, but we must devote time and effort daily to building them. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said “we should pray for a testimony, study the scriptures, follow the counsel of our prophet and other Church leaders, and live the principles of the gospel. Our testimonies will then grow and mature naturally, perhaps imperceptibly at times, until they become driving forces in our lives” (“Patience: A Key to Happiness,” *Ensign*, May 1987). As I chose and invested in being a triathlete, we too must choose and invest in being a disciple. We must choose to invest in our family and friends and champion them through

adversity as the Savior would. We must choose to invest daily in the small and simple things and choose to be a disciple of Christ.

CHOOSE TO BUILD YOUR FAITH

As we study the gospel and serve in the Church and in our homes, we increase our knowledge of the gospel and strengthen our foundations of faith. In Doctrine and Covenants 88:77–78, the Lord has commanded us to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God.” We need to ensure that we are making time to learn as we serve in the Church. Make the time for the Spirit to speak to you as you prepare your lessons and activities and teach. The women of the New Testament “valiantly participated in the work of saving souls, temporally and spiritually” (*Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*, 2011, 3). We need to and can do the same. Choose to strengthen your commitment to keeping your covenants and building the kingdom of God in your home and on the earth. This will increase your faith. The Lord said, “Their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; ... For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will” (D&C 76:9–10). As we choose to study the gospel we will be enlightened by the Spirit to see beyond the veil, and our faith in God’s power, plan and love for us will grow. We will begin to shift from a mortal to an eternal perspective, aligning our will more completely with God’s.

Elder Maxwell said, “The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best? The same is true with the second coming and with all those matters wherein our faith needs to include faith in the Lord’s timing for us personally, not just in His overall plans and purposes” (*Even As I Am*, 1982, 93.) In our everyday lives this is difficult, as we live in mortality with the veil blocking our view of eternity. It is sometimes hard to keep an eternal perspective when the dishes are piling up, when the emails are waiting to be answered, and when you’re sleep deprived. But, as we choose to do the small and simple things to build our faith, we can see things more as Heavenly Father sees them; we will see things from His perspective. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “We are looked upon by God as though we were in eternity. God dwells in eternity, and does not view things as we do” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 356). Therefore, His plan is going to be different than ours, even though we have the same end goal.

I sometimes lack the trust in Heavenly Father’s timing. I have faith and a testimony of the plan of salvation. But the faith I need for personal perseverance and direction is sometimes lacking. Sometimes I’m afraid of what being single at 35 means for the rest of my mortality—will my sister forever be my life insurance beneficiary? I am afraid that giving a *talk* on *this* topic will kill the hope I have inside of me that I work so hard to keep alive, the *hope* that the plan Heavenly Father has for each of his daughters will somehow come to pass here on earth for me. My hope is still alive, but the reality of and the thinking/saying these things is dragging me down and I hate being down. Heavenly Father does *not* want us to be down. These unrealized dreams and plans bring me sadness and dissatisfaction and even a loss of the Spirit in my life. So I choose to live my life as Heavenly Father has blessed me. You can also make this choice. The

struggles may be different—infertility, single parenting, a lost job, a struggling testimony, wayward children, and so many other things may lead us to sadness and dissatisfaction, and a decreased presence of the Spirit in our lives. We must work hard to build our faith so that we can endure our challenges with the Spirit guiding us. We must choose to look up. As Elder Carl B. Cook of the Seventy said, “If we . . . exercise our faith and look to God for help, we will not be overwhelmed with burdens of life. We will not feel incapable of doing what we are called to do or need to do. We will be strengthened and our lives will be filled with peace and joy. We will come to realize that most of what we worry about is not of eternal significance—and if it is, the Lord will help us. But we must have the faith to look up and the courage to follow His direction” (“It is Better to Look Up,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 33–34). Look to Heavenly Father for the peace and comfort you seek. If you lack faith, work to build it.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, “trust in God’s will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable.” Let’s set ourselves up to execute the plan He has for us and choose to build our faith in God’s will, His plan and His timetable. Elder Oaks has taught that it is essential that we do the right things at the right time (“Timing,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2003). We must choose to build our faith in the Lord’s timing.

CHOOSE TO BE COMFORTED

At some point we have each been in a situation that felt perfect—it fit into our vision and plan for our lives. This was the beginning of the happily ever after we always knew would be ours. But, then the relationship fails, the house falls through, the job isn’t what you thought, sickness prevails, etc. These visions/plans/ideas can be the beginning of our time in what Elder Maxwell calls “the cell of our circumstance” (“Patience,” speeches.byu.edu, Nov. 27, 1979). This holding cell is a place where we wait for the happily ever after we seek to find us, where we wait for our unwelcome trial to end, where we longingly look through the bars at what could, should or might have been. This holding cell is kept by Satan—he keeps us there and manages us with disappointment, frustration, envy, impatience, selfishness, self-importance and even wilting faith. To arrive at this cell we forget that the Lord loves us, that He is mindful of us, and that He is our greatest resource in moments like these. Elder Marvin J. Ashton said we must “pray constantly for help, endurance, and understanding. God does answer our prayers” (“He Is There,” *New Era*, Oct. 1993). He will be with us through it all.

“God has a timetable for . . . each person: ‘But all things must come to pass in their time’ (D&C 64:32). . . . Do not ‘refuse to be comforted.’ Let the revelations comfort you. Let the scriptures refresh you!” (Neal A. Maxwell, “These are Your Days,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2004).

President Henry B. Eyring just taught us in April general conference that “We have the gospel of Jesus Christ to shape and guide our lives if we choose it. And with prophets revealing to us our place in the plan of salvation, we can live with perfect hope and a feeling of peace. . . . We can feel the love of God. The Savior has promised angels on our left and our right to bear us up (D&C 84:88). And He always keeps His word” (“Mountains to Climb,” *Ensign*, May 2012). We must choose to seek the hope and peace our place in the plan of salvation allows us.

The people in our lives, just like my friends through my training, can inspire us to see beyond the veil, comforting us by bearing testimony. They give us the opportunity to see more, and trust more in our Heavenly Father, as they are outside of our circumstances. The Lord's way of developing us into celestial beings often involves stretching; sometimes it is deep, uncomfortable stretching. This is stretching that we can prepare for by building a strong foundation of faith and developing disciple characteristics. We can choose to be comforted by His words in Doctrine and Covenants 122. He said, "Therefore, hold on thy way ... Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever" (D&C 122:9). We are buoyed up by the angels around us and strengthened as we are stretched, becoming more faithful disciples as we work through each trial. As we press forward through our afflictions and disappointments, we can also find comfort remembering what Nephi taught us: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). We must choose to be comforted.

CHOOSE TO BE PATIENT

The moments in our lives that require steadfastness, endurance and faithful patience are the moments when our agency is truly being tested. How are we responding to the challenges placed before us? Are we choosing to be patient? He reminded us, "I am in your midst" (D&C 38:7). "And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours" (D&C 78:18). We have to have the patience and humility to let Him lead us to the riches of eternity. Elder Maxwell taught us that "Patience is a vital mortal virtue in relation to our faith, our free agency, our attitude toward life, our humility and our suffering. Moreover, patience will not be an obsolete attribute in the next world." With patience we can endure "today for a better tomorrow" and "deal more effectively with the unevenness of life's experiences" ("Patience," speeches.byu.edu, 1979, 3-4). As we develop an increased amount of patience we will find ourselves comforted by promises of the Lord and more aligned with the purposes of God. We will find ourselves listening more closely to what the Spirit prompts us to do. We will be of good cheer, and we will find ourselves more humble, seeking the Lord's direction in our lives more often. As we develop patience we will find ourselves remembering what we already know but sometimes forget, from Ecclesiastes: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

The Lord knows and understands our limitations and our abilities, and He still offers us the riches of eternity. He calls on us to be patient while He leads us, saying, "And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours" (D&C 78:18). We must choose to develop the patience Elder Maxwell defines as "a willingness ... to watch the unfolding purposes of God with a sense of wonder and awe, rather than pacing up and down within the cell of our circumstance" ("Patience," speeches.byu.edu, 1979, 2). We have to be faithful, active participants in fulfilling the Lord's plans and timetable, while at the same time working hard to leave behind the frustration, pacing and disappointment that come with Heavenly Father's plans that are different than our own. We must choose to be patient.

To recognize the Lord's plan for each of us and slow down and patiently wait for His direction, we must use our agency wisely. The blessing of maintaining an eternal perspective will be ours if we choose to put the Lord first, be a disciple of Christ, build our faith, be comforted, and be patient. I testify that the Lord is mindful of each of us. He loves us. He has a plan for each of us that is far better than we can imagine. As we choose to align ourselves with our Heavenly Father, we will be blessed with increased faith in His timing, and we will find the peace that comes with having an eternal perspective.