

Do We Trust Him? Hard Is Good

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Regardless of the issue, hard can be good for those who will move forward with faith and trust the Lord and His plan.

Before I begin, as one representing all of us impacted by the devastation of the recent hurricanes and earthquakes, I express my heartfelt appreciation for all the Helping Hands and their facilitators, who gave us help and hope.

In October 2006, I gave my first general conference talk. I felt an important message for the worldwide Church included the assertion “The Lord trusts us!”

He really does trust us in so many ways. He has given us the gospel of Jesus Christ and, in this dispensation, its fulness. He entrusts us with His priesthood authority, complete with the keys for its proper use. With that power we can bless, serve, receive ordinances, and make covenants. He trusts us with His restored Church, including the holy temple. He trusts His servants with the sealing power—to bind on earth and have it bound in heaven! He even trusts us to be the earthly parents, teachers, and caregivers of His children.

After these years of General Authority service in many parts of the world, I declare with even more certainty: He trusts us.

Now the question for this conference is “Do we trust Him?”

Do We Trust Him?

President Thomas S. Monson often reminds us to “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.

“Be not wise in thine own eyes” (Proverbs 3:5–7).

Do we trust His commandments to be for our good? His leaders, though imperfect, to lead us well? His promises to be sure? Do we trust that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ do know us and want to help us? Even in the midst of trials, challenges, and hard times, do we still trust Him?

Looking back, I learned some of the best lessons during the hardest times—whether as a youth, on a mission, starting a new career, striving to magnify my callings, raising a large family, or struggling to be self-reliant. It seems clear that hard is good!

Hard Is Good

Hard makes us stronger, humbles us, and gives us a chance to prove ourselves. Our beloved handcart pioneers came to know God *in their extremities*. Why did it take two chapters for Nephi and his brothers to obtain the brass plates and only three verses to enlist Ishmael's family to join them in the wilderness? (see 1 Nephi 3–4; 7:3–5). It seems the Lord wanted to strengthen Nephi through the struggle of obtaining the plates.

The hard things in our lives should come as no surprise. One of the earliest covenants we make with the Lord is to live the law of sacrifice. Sacrifice, by definition, involves giving up something desirable. With experience we realize it is a small price to pay in relation to the blessings that follow. Under the direction of Joseph Smith, it was said that “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.”¹

Members of the Godhead are no strangers to hard things. God the Father sacrificed His Only Begotten Son to the terrible suffering of the Atonement, including death by crucifixion. The scriptures say Jesus Christ learned “obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). He voluntarily suffered the agony of the Atonement. The Holy Ghost must be long-suffering to prompt, warn, and guide us, only to sometimes be ignored, misinterpreted, or forgotten.

Part of the Plan

Hard is part of the gospel plan. One of the purposes of this life is for us to be proven (see Abraham 3:25). Few have suffered more undeservedly than the people of Alma. They fled from wicked King Noah, only to become slaves to the Lamanites! Through those trials the Lord taught them that He chastens His people and tries “their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21).

During the terrible days in Liberty Jail, the Lord taught Joseph Smith to “endure it well” (D&C 121:8) and promised that if he did, “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7).

President Thomas S. Monson has pleaded, “May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.”² With regard to our temples, he stated that “no sacrifice is too great, no price too heavy, no struggle too difficult in order to receive [temple] blessings.”³

In the world of nature, hard is part of the circle of life. It is hard for a baby chick to hatch out of that tough eggshell. But when someone tries to make it easier, the chick does not develop the strength necessary to live. In a similar way, the struggle of a butterfly to escape the cocoon strengthens it for the life it will live.

Through these examples, we see that hard is the *constant*! We all have challenges. The *variable* is our reaction to the hard.

At one point, some Book of Mormon people suffered “great persecutions” and “much affliction” (Helaman 3:34). How did they react? “They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation” (Helaman 3:35). Another example occurred after years of war: “Because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, ... and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God” (Alma 62:41).

We each choose our reaction to hard.

Be Careful with Easy

Before this calling I was a financial consultant in Houston, Texas. Most of my work was with multimillionaires who owned their own businesses. Almost all of them had created their successful businesses from nothing through lots of hard work. The saddest thing for me was to hear some of them say that they wanted to make it easier for their children. They did not want their children to suffer as they had. In other words, they would deprive their children of the very thing that had made them successful.

By contrast, we know a family who took a different approach. The parents were inspired by J. C. Penney’s experience where his father told him when he turned eight years old that he was on his own financially. They came up with their own version: as their children graduated from high school, they were on their own financially—for further education (college, graduate school) and for their financial maintenance (truly self-reliant) (see D&C 83:4). Happily, the children reacted wisely. All of them are college graduates, and several also completed graduate school—all on their own. It wasn’t easy, but they did it. They did it with hard work and faith.

Faith to Trust Him

The question “Do we trust Him?” may be better stated, “Do we have the *faith* to trust Him?”

Do we have the *faith* to trust His promises regarding tithing that with 90 percent of our increase *plus the Lord's help*, we are better off than with 100 percent *on our own*?

Do we have sufficient *faith* to trust that He will visit us in our afflictions (see Mosiah 24:14), that He will contend with those that contend with us (see Isaiah 49:25; 2 Nephi 6:17), and that He will consecrate our afflictions for our gain? (see 2 Nephi 2:2).

Will we exercise the *faith* necessary to keep His commandments so He can bless us both temporally and spiritually? And will we continue faithful to the end so that He can receive us into His presence? (see Mosiah 2:41).

Brothers and sisters, we can have the faith to trust Him! He wants what is best for us (see Moses 1:39). He will answer our prayers (see D&C 112:10). He will keep His promises (see D&C 1:38). He has the power to keep those promises (see Alma 37:16). He knows everything! And most important, He knows what is best (see Isaiah 55:8–9).

A Dangerous World

Our world today is difficult. We have rampant evil, corruption in every nation, terrorism reaching even safe places, economic collapse, unemployment, disease, natural disasters, civil wars, despotic leaders, and so on. What should we do? Do we flee or fight? Which is right? Either choice can be dangerous. It was dangerous for George Washington and his armies to fight but also for our pioneer ancestors to flee. It was dangerous for Nelson Mandela to struggle for freedom. It has been said that for evil to prevail, it is only necessary for good people to do nothing.⁴

Fear Not!

In whatever we do, we should not decide nor act out of a spirit of fear. Truly, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7). (Do you realize the idea of “fear not” is emphasized throughout the scriptures?) The Lord has taught me that discouragement and fear are tools of the adversary. The Lord’s answer to hard times is to go forward with faith.

What Is Hard?

Each of us may have a different opinion about what is hard. Some may consider it hard to pay tithing when finances are tight. Leaders sometimes find it difficult to expect the poor to pay tithing. It may be hard for some of us to go forward with faith to marry or to have a family. There are those who find it hard “to be content with [what] the Lord hath allotted unto [them]” (Alma 29:3). It may be hard to be content with our current calling (see Alma 29:6). Church discipline may seem very hard, but for some it marks the beginning of the true repentance process.

Regardless of the issue, hard can be good for those who will move forward with faith and trust the Lord and His plan.

My Witness

My brothers and sisters, I witness that these leaders seated behind me are called of God. Their desire is to serve the Lord well and help us establish the gospel in our hearts. I love and sustain them.

I love our Savior, Jesus Christ. I marvel that He loved the Father and us enough to become our Savior and Redeemer; that by so doing, He had to suffer such that it caused Him “to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:18). Yet faced with this awful prospect and its necessity, He affirmed to the Father, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). I glory in the angel’s words: “He is not here: for he is risen” (Matthew 28:6).

His example truly is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Only by following that example can we find “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). As I have followed His example and applied His teachings, I have learned for myself that each of His “exceedingly great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) is true.

My greatest desires are to stand with Mormon as a true disciple of Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 5:13) and to one day hear from His lips, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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