

Look down the Road

By Elder Alvin F. Meredith III
Of the Seventy

Focusing on the things that are most important—especially those things “down the road,” those eternal things—is a key to maneuvering through this life.

When I turned 15 years old, I received a learner’s permit, which allowed me to drive a car if one of my parents was with me. When my father asked if I would like to go for a drive, I was thrilled.

He drove a few miles to the outskirts of town to a long, straight, two-lane road that few people used—I should note, likely the only place he would have felt safe. He pulled over on the shoulder of the road, and we switched seats. He gave me some coaching and then told me, “Ease out onto the road and just drive until I tell you to stop.”

I followed his orders exactly. But after about 60 seconds, he said, “Son, pull the car over. You’re making me nauseous. You are swerving all over the road.” He asked, “What are you looking at?”

With some exasperation, I said, “I’m looking at the road.”

Then he said this: “I’m watching your eyes, and you are looking only at what is right in front of the hood of the car. If you look only at what is directly in front of you, you will never drive straight.” Then he emphasized, “Look down the road. That will help you drive straight.”

As a 15-year-old, I thought that was a good driving lesson. I have since realized that that was a great life lesson as well. Focusing on the things that are most important—especially those things “down the road,” those eternal things—is a key to maneuvering through this life.

On one occasion in the Savior’s life, He desired to be alone, so “he went up into a mountain apart to pray.”¹ He sent His disciples away with instructions to cross the sea. In the dark of the night, the ship that carried the disciples came upon a ferocious storm. Jesus went to their rescue but in an unconventional way. The

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Peter was not only relieved but also emboldened. Ever courageous and often impetuous, Peter cried out to Jesus, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”⁴ Jesus replied with His familiar and timeless invitation: “Come.”⁵

Peter, surely thrilled by the prospect, climbed out of the boat not into the water but onto the water. While he focused on the Savior, he could do the impossible, even walk on water. Initially, Peter was undeterred by the storm. But the “boisterous”⁶ wind eventually distracted him, and he lost his focus. The fear returned. Consequently, his faith diminished, and he began to sink. “He cried, saying, Lord, save me.”⁷ The Savior, who is always eager to save, reached out and lifted him up to safety.

There are a myriad of lessons to learn from this miraculous account, but I will mention three.

Focus on Christ

The first lesson: focus on Jesus Christ. While Peter kept his eyes focused on Jesus, he could walk on water. The storm, the waves, and the wind could not hinder him as long he centered his focus on the Savior.

Understanding our ultimate purpose helps us determine what our focus should be. We cannot play a successful game without knowing the goal, nor can we live a meaningful life without knowing its purpose. One of the great blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that it answers, among other things, the question “What is the purpose of life?” “Our purpose in this life is to have joy and prepare to return to God’s presence.”⁸ Remembering that we are here on earth to prepare to return to live with God helps us focus on the things that lead us to Christ.

Focusing on Christ requires discipline, especially about the small and simple spiritual habits that help us become better disciples. There is no discipleship without discipline.

Our focus on Christ becomes more clear when we look down the road at where we want to be and who we want to become and then make time every day to do those things that will help us get there. Focusing on Christ can simplify our decisions and provide a guide for how we can best spend our time and resources.

While there are many things worthy of our focus, we learn from Peter’s example the importance of always keeping Christ at the center of our focus. It is only through Christ that we can return to live with God. We rely on the grace of Christ as we strive to become like Him and seek His forgiveness and strengthening power

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The second lesson: beware of distractions. When Peter turned his focus away from Jesus and toward the wind and the waves that whipped at his feet, he began to sink.

There are many things “in front of the hood” that can distract us from focusing on Christ and eternal things that are “down the road.” The devil is the great distractor. We learn from Lehi’s dream that voices from the great and spacious building seek to lure us to things that will take us off the course of preparing to return to live with God.⁹

But there are other less-obvious distractions that can be just as dangerous. As the saying goes, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” The adversary seems determined to get good people to do nothing, or at least to waste their time on things that will distract them from their lofty purposes and goals. For example, some things that are healthy diversions in moderation can become unhealthy distractions without discipline. The adversary understands that distractions do not have to be bad or immoral to be effective.

We Can Be Rescued

The third lesson: we can be rescued. When Peter began to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him.”¹⁰ When we find ourselves sinking, when we face affliction, or when we falter, we too can be rescued by Him.

In the face of affliction or trial, you may be like me and hope that the rescue will be immediate. But remember that the Savior came to the aid of the Apostles in the fourth watch of the night—after they had spent most of the night toiling in the storm.¹¹ We may pray that if the help will not come immediately, it will at least come in the second watch or even the third watch of the proverbial night. When we must wait, rest assured that the Savior is always watching, ensuring that we will not have to endure more than we can bear.¹² To those who are waiting in the fourth watch of the night, perhaps still in the midst of suffering, do not lose hope. Rescue always comes to the faithful, whether during mortality or in the eternities.

Sometimes our sinking comes because of our mistakes and transgressions. If you find yourself sinking for those reasons, make the joyful choice to repent.¹³ I believe that few things give the Savior more joy than saving those who turn, or return, to Him.¹⁴ The scriptures are full of stories of people who were once fallen and flawed but who repented and became firm in the faith of Christ. I think those stories are in the scriptures to remind us that the Savior’s love for us and His power to redeem us are infinite. Not only does the Savior have joy when we repent, but we receive great

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I invite you to be intentional about “looking down the road” and increase your focus on those things that really matter. May we keep Christ at the center of our focus. In the midst of all the distractions, the things “in front of the hood,” and the whirlwinds that surround us, I testify that Jesus is our Savior and our Redeemer and our Rescuer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. 1. Matthew 14:23.
2. 2. Matthew 14:25.
3. 3. Matthew 14:27.
4. 4. Matthew 14:28.
5. 5. Matthew 14:29.
6. 6. Matthew 14:30.
7. 7. Matthew 14:30.
8. 8. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2019), 50.
9. 9. See 1 Nephi 8:26–27; 12:18.
10. 10. Matthew 14:30–31.
11. 11. See Mark 6:48.
12. 12. See 1 Corinthians 10:13.
13. 13. See Dale G. Renlund, “Repentance: A Joyful Choice,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 121–24.
14. 14. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:13.

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