

Just Keep Going—with Faith

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Exercising faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, helps us overcome discouragement no matter what obstacles we encounter.

Elder George A. Smith, an Apostle, received counsel from the Prophet Joseph Smith at a time of great difficulty: “He told me I should never get discouraged, whatever difficulties might surround me. If I was sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia and all the Rocky Mountains piled on top of me, I ought not to be discouraged but hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage and I should come out on the top of the heap at last.”¹

How could the Prophet Joseph say that—to someone who was suffering? Because he knew it was true. He lived it. Joseph repeatedly experienced severe difficulties in his life. However, as he exercised faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement and just kept going, he overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles.²

Today I would like to renew Joseph’s plea not to let discouragement overwhelm us when we face disappointment, painful experiences, our own inadequacies, or other challenges.

When I say discouragement, I’m not talking about the more debilitating challenges of clinical depression, anxiety disorders, or other illnesses that require special treatment.³ I’m just talking about plain old discouragement that comes with the ups and downs of life.

I am inspired by my heroes who just keep going—with faith—no matter what.⁴ In the Book of Mormon, we read of Zoram, the servant of Laban. When Nephi obtained the brass plates, Zoram was faced with the choice to follow Nephi and his brothers into the wilderness or possibly lose his life.

What a choice! Zoram’s first inclination was to run, but Nephi held him and made an oath that if he would go with them, he would be free and have a place with their family. Zoram took courage and went with them.⁵

Zoram suffered many afflictions in his new life, yet he pressed forward with faith. We have no indication that Zoram clung to his past or harbored resentment toward God or others.⁶ He was a true friend to Nephi, a prophet, and he and his seed dwelt in freedom and prosperity in the promised land. What had been a huge obstacle in Zoram's path eventually led to rich blessings, due to his faithfulness and willingness to just keep going—with faith.⁷

Recently I listened to a courageous sister share how she persevered through difficulties.⁸ She had some challenges, and one Sunday she was sitting in Relief Society, listening to a teacher who she thought lived a picture-perfect life—totally different from her own. She was tired and discouraged. She felt like she didn't measure up—or even belong—so she got up and left, planning to never return to church again. Walking to her car, she felt a distinct impression: “Go into the chapel and listen to the sacrament meeting speaker.” She questioned the prompting but felt it again strongly, so she went into the meeting.

The message was exactly what she needed. She felt the Spirit. She knew the Lord wanted her to stay with Him, to be His disciple, and to attend church, so she did.

Do you know what she was grateful for? That she didn't give up. She just kept going—with faith in Jesus Christ, even when it stretched her, and she and her family are being abundantly blessed as she presses forward.

The God of heaven and earth will help us overcome discouragement and whatever obstacles we encounter if we look to Him, follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost,⁹ and just keep going—with faith.

Thankfully, when we are weak or incapable, the Lord can strengthen our faith. He can increase our capacity beyond our own. I have experienced that. More than 20 years ago, I was unexpectedly called as an Area Seventy, and I felt very inadequate. Following my training assignments, I was to preside at my first stake conference.¹⁰ The stake president and I meticulously planned every detail. Shortly before the conference, President Boyd K. Packer, then-Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called to see if he could accompany me. I was surprised and, of course, agreed. I asked how he would like to proceed since he would preside. He suggested that we undo the plans and prepare to follow the Spirit. Thankfully, I still had 10 days to study, pray, and prepare.

With an open agenda, we were on the stand 20 minutes before the leadership meeting began. I leaned over to the stake president and whispered, “This is a wonderful stake.”

President Packer elbowed me gently and said, “No talking.”

I stopped talking, and his general conference talk “Reverence Invites Revelation”¹¹ came to mind. I observed that President Packer was writing down scripture references. The Spirit confirmed to me that he was receiving impressions for the meeting. My learning experience had just begun.

President Packer spoke for the first 15 minutes and emphasized the importance of conducting all meetings as guided by the Holy Spirit.¹² He then said, “We will now hear from Elder Cook.”

On my way to the pulpit, I asked how long he would like me to take and if there was a topic he would like me to address. He said, “Take 15 minutes and carry on as you feel inspired.” I took about 14 minutes and shared everything I had on my mind.

President Packer stood again and spoke for another 15 minutes. He shared this scripture:

“Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men;

“For it shall be given you ... in the very moment, what ye shall say.”¹³

Then he said, “We will now hear from Elder Cook.”

I was shocked. I had never considered the possibility that I would be asked to speak twice in one meeting. I didn’t have anything in mind to say. Praying fervently and relying on the Lord for help, somehow, I was blessed with a thought, a scripture, and I was able to speak for another 15 minutes. I sat down totally exhausted.

President Packer spoke again for 15 minutes about following the Spirit and shared Paul’s teachings that we should not speak “words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”¹⁴ As you can imagine, I was overwhelmed when he was impressed to say for the third time, “We will now hear from Elder Cook.”

I was empty. I had nothing. I knew it was time to exercise more faith. Slowly, I made my way to the pulpit, pleading to God for help. As I stepped up to the microphone, the Lord miraculously blessed me to somehow give another 15-minute message.¹⁵

The meeting finally ended, but I quickly realized that the adult session would start in one hour. Oh, no! Like Zoram, I sincerely wanted to run, but just as Nephi caught him, I knew President Packer would catch me. The adult meeting followed the very same pattern. I spoke three more times. The next day during the general session, I spoke once.

After the conference, President Packer said with affection, “Let’s do it again sometime.” I love President Boyd K. Packer and appreciate all

that I learned.

Do you know what I am grateful for? That I didn't give up—or resist. If I had given in to my desperate desire to escape from those meetings, I would have missed an opportunity to increase my faith and receive a rich outpouring of love and support from my Heavenly Father. I learned of His mercy, the miraculous enabling power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, and the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost. In spite of my weakness,¹⁶ I learned that I can serve; I can contribute when the Lord is by my side if I just keep going—with faith.

Regardless of the size, scope, and seriousness of the challenges we face in life, we all have times when we feel like stopping, leaving, escaping, or possibly giving up. But exercising faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, helps us overcome discouragement no matter what obstacles we encounter.

Just as the Savior finished the work He was given to do, He has the power to help us finish the work we have been given.¹⁷ We can be blessed to move forward along the covenant path, no matter how rocky it becomes, and eventually receive eternal life.¹⁸

As the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “Stand fast, ye Saints of God, hold on a little while longer, and the storm of life will be past, and you will be rewarded by that God whose servants you are.”¹⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. George A. Smith, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2011), 235.
2. See *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 227–36.
3. When I speak of discouragement, I am not suggesting that to “just keep going with faith in Christ” is the only effort needed for people experiencing clinical depression, anxiety disorders, or other illnesses. For these friends, family members, and others listening, I echo the counsel of our Church leaders to please seek medical, psychological, and spiritual care while trusting in the Lord. My heart goes out to each of you wrestling with these unique challenges. We sincerely pray for you.
4. Some of my heroes in the scriptures include Caleb (see Numbers 14:6–9, 24), Job (see Job 19:25–26), and Nephi (see 1 Nephi 3:7), in addition to my modern-day heroes.
5. See 1 Nephi 4:20, 30–35, 38.

6. See Dale G. Renlund, “Infuriating Unfairness,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 41–45.
7. See 2 Nephi 1:30–32. “Although [Zoram] had to endure a little rough handling, the trap he was caught in was the very situation through which God had determined to bless him. Though he had to give up his homeland, God was preparing a better one” (David B. Paxman, “Zoram and I: Getting Our Stories Straight” [Brigham Young University devotional, July 27, 2010], 8, speeches.byu.edu).
8. I heard this sister’s testimony in a ward in the Riverdale Utah Stake on December 11, 2022. The experience she shared occurred in a previous ward.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:12–13.
10. My assignment was in the Benson Utah Stake on November 3–4, 2001. President Jerry Toombs was the stake president.
11. See Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21–23.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6; see also verses 7–8.
14. 1 Corinthians 2:13.
15. President Russell M. Nelson has said, “When you spiritually stretch beyond anything you have ever done before, then [the Savior’s] power will flow into you” (“Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 42).
16. See Ether 12:27.
17. See John 17:4.
18. See 2 Nephi 31:20; Mosiah 2:41; Alma 36:3.
19. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 235.