

Section Three

Overcoming Adversity, Trials, and Heartache

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91. Through Our Trials We Come to Know God

Some time ago I spoke with a lady who had been suffering from cancer for an extended time. I asked her how she was doing and how she was coping with her illness. Her answer was profound. She said, "It has been difficult but I wouldn't change a thing, for through my trials I have come to know God." The early pioneers in the handcart company expressed the same sentiment. Through their trials they had come to know God. When they could push their handcart no further they felt someone else pushing it for them. **We will all have trials. Let us remain faithful in them that we may indeed, "Come to Know God."**

Through Our Trials

Through our trials we come to know God.
Through our trials, humbled is our heart.
Through our trials comes the refiner's fire
Through our trials He carries us home.

Learn of Him and know He is near.
Trust in Him, He is always there.
Go to Him pleading in mighty prayer.
Lean on Him, rely on His care.

Cry in Faith that His will be done.
Cry in Hope through His precious Son
Cry in love, sharing all gifts from Him.
Cry in all that you may know Him.

(Chorus after 2nd and 3rd verses)

Through our trials we come to know God,
Through our trials we feel of His love
Through His love we see life's meaning,
Through our trials He carries us Home
RTS

92. Our Trials Will be Consecrated for Our Good

Elder Orson F. Whitney, an early leader of the church, shared this counsel: **"No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God...and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we came here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven."** We all face challenges, trials, tribulation and sorrow at some time in our lives. May we face them with patience, humility and faith.

93. Get Up Off the Mat!

It has been said that success is getting up one more time than you fall down. Everyone gets knocked down at times, but unfortunately some choose to stay down and give up. It takes courage and fortitude to get up and try again, but that is the way to grow. Wrestling is a competitive, all out sport where just a few brief moments results in a winner and a loser. Heavenly Father wants all of us to be winners in the battle of life. Of course we all make mistakes but we must not let that define who we are. Remember that in the battle of life we have a Champion, a Savior who swallowed up our shortcomings so that we could become clean, whole and worthy to walk forward toward the great light of eternal life. When you make a mistake Satan will tell you to stay down, that it's too hard and you're not going to be able to do it. In our corner is our Savior, our Advocate with the Father, who is pleading our cause. He has already taken upon Himself our failures, our sorrows, our shortcomings and made it possible for us to overcome all of them. So, wherever you are, "Get up off the mat and back into the ring of life." You will find within you a courage and hope you didn't know was there, and He will walk beside you all the way to the finish line. Then the Father will declare, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." **May all of us keep getting up off the mat time and time again until we make it safely home through the merits, love, and mercy of our beloved Savior and Redeemer.**

94. The Obstacles Before You

"When you are involved in the work of the Lord. the obstacles before you are never as great as the power behind you." (John K. Edmunds). There are always obstacles before us that will either become stumbling blocks or stepping stones. Think of young Enoch, slow of speech until he received strength from the Lord. The Lord told Enoch, "Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me." (Mos. 6:34). The American patriot Thomas Carlyle said, "Every noble work is at first impossible." What is impossible for us today will be achievable in the future as we learn, grow and develop, learning to yoke our limited strength with the infinite strength of our Master, the Savior Jesus Christ. Obstacles become springboards of growth and progress as we learn to successfully navigate the challenges before us which will strengthen our character, increase our abilities, and help us become polished tools in the hands of our Maker.

95. The Lord Giveth

“The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (See Job 1:21). It takes faith to see the hand of the Lord in both the good times as well as the hard times in our lives. It takes proper perspective to understand that truly all we possess is given to us by God, even the air we breathe and our bodies which are made from the dust of the earth. It takes faith to take the eternal view of our lives, that our eternal existence is similar to a three act play. We existed before we were born, we live briefly in mortality, and we live eternally after we leave this time of mortal probation. What do we take with us when we die? Certainly none of our worldly possessions. Yes, we can take the knowledge we have gained, the relationships we have developed, the character that we have formed and the testimony that has become our prized possession. Just as Job lost his family members due to death, his health, and his prosperity, yet he remained true to his testimony. As he declared: “I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in the flesh shall I see God.” (Job 19:25-26). Job was given a glimpse into our premortal existence when the Lord asked him: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?...When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4,7). May we remain faithful as did Job, whatever the Lord may give us or whatever the Lord may take away. May we always say: “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

96. Find a Way

The world will say you can't do it. Find a way.
Your Critics will say you're not strong enough. Find a Way.
You will encounter failure after failure. Find a way to succeed.
Sometimes you will stumble and fall. Find a way to get up and go again.
Sometimes you will be at your wits end and exhausted. Find a way to go on.
Sometimes the pain will seem more than you can bear. Find a way to block the pain and go on.
Sometimes you will try and fail 99 times on your quest. Find a way to be better on the 100th.
Sometimes you will run into a brick wall. Find a way to go through, around or over it.
Sometimes the deck seems stacked against you. Find a way to overcome all obstacles.
Sometimes your opponent seems stronger and better. Find your strengths and build on them.
It doesn't matter what the world says. Find a way.
It doesn't matter what the critics say. Find a way to go the distance and win the prize!
RTS.

97. Don't Let Yesterday Control Today

The noted film actor, newspaper columnist and social commentator Will Rogers wrote: **“Don't let yesterday take up too much of today.”** Will Rogers understood that too much looking backward would take the focus and energy from today. Too many of us keep asking **“what might have been”** Instead of focusing our time and energy on **“what it is”** that lies before us today. Wise counsel has been given: “Don't cry over spilled milk” or “it's water under the bridge.” We cannot go back and undo what has been done but we can move forward and do what needs to be done today! Just as looking too much in the past draws away our energy and focus, looking too much into the future can limit our actions in the present. Today is the day we can control. Today we can prioritize, strive and accomplish the tasks before us. Today is the Day! Worry is the destroyer of energy; distraction leads to loss of power to accomplish the tasks that lie before us. Today is your day with twenty four hours to do what you can do to make yourself and this world a better place to be in. Today is the day, for the book is closed on the events of yesterday and in a sense tomorrow never comes. We must learn from the lessons and mistakes of yesterday to do and be better today and to prepare for tomorrow. May our eyes be focused on that which lies before us on THIS DAY. **If we do our best today we will have no regrets about yesterday and look forward with anticipation to the opportunities that lie before us.**

98. What Am I to Learn?

We all face times of challenge, trials and adversity in our lives. Death, sickness, and setbacks come to each and every one of us in our own time and circumstances. When we face those challenges rather than asking, “Why me?,” a good question to ask is, “What can I learn from this experience?” A great part of life's experience is to walk by faith, and it is during the time of trial that our faith can grow as we continue to be faithful with a spirit of hope. As we learn to wait upon the Lord, trusting in His timing, we truly do begin to learn those lessons of life that oftentimes we can learn in no other way. As we continue faithful in times of trial we receive the promise: “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings of eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.” (Isa. 40:31).

99. Hang On

There are times in our lives when we are at the end of our rope, so to speak, and we don't know where to turn. There may be trying times when we are ready to give up, to lose faith or hope. Sometimes it seems that all we can do in those times is simply to hang on until help arrives and indeed it will arrive. **The Savior is aware of us in our desperate hours and indeed will succor us or run to our aid if we will only endure a little longer. Have faith that He will never ask us to do more than we can do without His help, for indeed with His help we can do all things.** This song expresses the encouragement to "Hang On" in difficult times.

Hang On

Hang on till the night is over, hang on till the day dawn breaks.
I know the times are lonely, the burden seems so great.
Hang on, hang on, hang on, hang on till the battle's o'er.
There's one who will watch and carry you, hang on, hang on, hang on.

Hang on when you seem defeated, hang on when all hope seems lost.
Hang on when others falter, hang on through pain and grief.
Hang on, hang on, hang on, hang on through the darkest hours.
There's one who will watch and carry you, hang on, hang on, hang on.

Bridge after the second verse

When times are hard and you can't go on,
Your strength and courage are gone,
Just look at the footprints in the sand
And know that He's carried you.

Hang on when your dreams seem shattered, hang on when your strength is gone.
You'll find your burden lifted, a rainbow arc in the sky.
Hang on, yes please hang on. Hang on 'till the battle's o'er.
There's one who will watch and carry you, hang on, hang on, hang on. RTS

100. When the Light Goes Out

There are times in each of our lives when the "light goes out" so to speak. It may be the estrangement of a relationship or the burnout of a job. It may be a loss of hope or health, of faith or joy. In those moments of darkness it takes a spark from another source to once again light our path. The spark may come from a kindly word or the gentle lift of another person walking the path with us. It may come from the spirit of encouragement or resolve that comes from inside us or from a higher source. When the light does go out, all hope is not lost. We can be the spark of hope as we reach out to serve others and we can receive the spark of light as we draw from the strength of others around us. There is within each of us a spark of divinity and that spark should be enough to never dwell in despair. **When the spark goes out, turn to God in prayer and to those who care about you for support. When you see those you care about losing the spark of light, be a light by your example and through your love. Love is the greatest power in the universe and when we share it with others we don't have less love, we have more of it.** That is the object of life: to walk in the light and to, in turn, light the path for others along the way. As you give, you will also receive, for the giver and the receiver are both blessed along the way.

101. Dealing With Depression

In the October 2013 general conference Jeffrey R. Holland gave a talk entitled, "Like a Broken Vessel." He spoke of those who suffer from mental or emotional challenges and also to the caregivers who support them. He spoke of Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill and George Albert Smith who suffered from significant depression. He invited each of us to watch for stress indicators and to limit fatigue. He said... **"slow down, rest up, replenish and refill.** Physicians promise us that if we do not take time to be well, we most assuredly will take time later to be ill. If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people with certified training, professional skills and good values. Be honest with them about your history and your struggles. Prayerfully and responsibly consider the counsel they give and the solutions they prescribe. If you had appendicitis, God would expect you to seek a priesthood blessing and get the best medical care available. So too with emotional disorders. Our Father in Heaven expects us to use all of the marvelous gifts He has provided in this glorious dispensation." He later continued, "Whatever your struggle, my brothers and sisters-mental or emotional or physical or otherwise- do not vote against the preciousness of life by ending it! Trust in God. Hold on in His love. Know that one day the dawn will break brightly, and all the shadows of mortality will flee. Though we may feel we are 'broken like a vessel' as the Psalmist says, we must remember, that vessel is in the hands of the divine potter. Broken minds can be healed just the way broken bones and broken hearts are healed." If you are struggling from mental or emotional challenges, our hearts go out to you in love and compassion. As Elder Holland concluded, "may we live by faith, hold fast to hope, and show 'compassion one of another.'"

102. Sisters Perspectives on Adversity

Mary Fielding Smith, the widow of Hiram Smith stated: "I have, to be sure, been called to drink deep of the bitter cup; but you know...this makes the sweet sweeter." Ardeth Greene Kapp wrote: "How do we handle unfulfilled expectations?...We must accept the reality that this life is not intended to be free of struggle. In fact, it is through struggle that we are given opportunities to fulfill the very purpose of this mortal life. It is the fiery trials of mortality that will either consume us or refine us." Camilla Eyring Kimball was the wife of Spencer W. Kimball who faced a lifetime of trials and struggles, but who rose to greatness. She wrote these words of inspiration: "Forget self pity and look for mountains to climb. Everyone has problems. The challenge is to cope with those problems and get our full measure of joy from life." Finally, Joy F. Evans counseled us to look to the Anchor to overcome our trials and adversities: "It is true for all of us that the winds will blow and beat upon our houses. It is true, also, that our houses will stand if they are built upon the rock of Jesus Christ. Whatever adversity or difficulty we experience can be met with courage and faith, and even joy." **Adversity and trials will be the lot of each of us in one way or another; may we meet them with courage, grace, dignity and unwavering faith, as we journey through this sacred experience of mortality.**

103. It Is Well With My Soul

In 1871 Horatio Spafford, a very successful businessman in Chicago, lost a son to pneumonia and much of his business in the great Chicago fire. Two years later his wife and four daughters were headed to Europe on a vacation, but he was delayed due to unforeseen business circumstances. Four days into the journey the ship they were on collided with another ship and tragically his four daughters were lost at sea. His wife sent a telegram upon her arrival, "Saved alone, what shall I do?" Horatio arranged to sail to Europe on the next ship. As they neared the place of the tragic collision, the captain of the ship, aware of the circumstances, informed Horatio that this was the place of the tragic accident. It was at this time and during the remainder of the voyage that Horatio Spafford penned the words to this hymn: "It Is Well With My Soul."

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Lest this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

And the Lord haste the day when faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as the scroll;
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul. (Vs 1,2,5)

Refrain:

It is well (It is well)

With my soul (with my soul)

It is well, it is well with my soul. (Horatio Spafford)

May the Lord buoy us up in the moments of trial and heartache to look forward to a better and brighter day.

May we say even as did Horatio in his moment of trial, searching and sorrow, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

104. Not Alone

There is a wonderful painting by Minerva Tigert depicting the journey west by Mary Fielding Smith, the widow of Hyrum Smith entitled, "Not Alone." In the painting Mary Fielding and her children are depicted on the long journey west, driving a team of oxen. On either side of the wagon are noted protecting angels, watching over Mary Fielding and her family along the way. It is reported that on one occasion during the journey, one of Mary Fielding's oxen became ill and unable to continue. Mary asked the elders to anoint her oxen but to no avail. Finally, through a prayer of faith her ox was healed and Mary Fielding Smith journeyed on safely to the Salt Lake valley. Just as Mary Fielding Smith was not alone, we are not alone in our time of need. In fact, we are never alone, but are sustained from breath to breath and day by day by our loving Heavenly Father. The only time that we know of someone being alone was the Savior as He brought to pass the infinite atonement, being left for a brief time by the Father in order for Him to truly overcome all things and to rescue us from sin and death. We always have a loving Savior and Heavenly Father on our side along with unseen heavenly beings who help us in our hour of need. Let us be sure that we do not separate ourselves from them through our actions. **May we always be faithful and worthy of divine intervention to succor us in our times of trial. Remember that we are indeed, "Not Alone."**

105. Sometimes Life's Not Fair

Sometimes life indeed is not fair. There are times in each of our lives that we are mistakenly judged or the ball takes a funny bounce differently than it is supposed to. There are times that others are chosen for the part when we were better qualified, and sometimes we face illnesses, heartache and trials that we seemingly do not deserve. One example is referees at a ballgame. It seems that they usually catch the person who responds to an insult rather than the one who initiated the skirmish. That starts a negative cycle that often continues with another person getting mad and also responding in a negative manner. **When things are unfair we can respond in one of two ways. We can respond negatively as well and continue the downward cycle of anger or we can take the higher road and not respond in anger believing that eventually things will balance out.** When life becomes unfair we can become angry, disillusioned or negative or we can press forward and stay focused on acting as we should. We need to realize that everyone makes mistakes, including our parents, and sometimes give them a little slack, realizing they are trying their best. When life isn't fair, choose to go forward anyway, you will be the better and stronger for it and learn the blessings of self-discipline and a positive character that will help you face any trial that may befall you, come what may.

106. Though He Were a Son

The apostle Paul taught a great truth when he said: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8-9). Even though He was the Son of God, He suffered more than anyone else in the history of the world. As the Lord taught the prophet Joseph Smith in Liberty jail: "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (D&C 122:8). Looking back through the corridors of time Isaiah saw and prophesied of the Savior's sufferings: "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." Isa: 53:4-7). **Whatever our lot is in life, we have not had to suffer as the Savior, and He will indeed succor us or run to our aid when we can go no further.**

107. Are You Having a Bad Day?

It seems that we all have a day in which everything goes wrong. We wake up on the wrong side of the bed, have a day or week of illness or failure at work or school. In those times it is easy to lose perspective and to feel that life will be forever a life of frustration. **In those times we just need to look around us to see how blessed we really are.** Look around at those who carry burdens for a lifetime. Many individuals who suffer severe brain injuries, strokes, or become paralyzed will bear those burdens through the rest of their lives. Kind caregivers provide a great service for those with extreme dementia, or severe birth defects that will require total care throughout their lives. Many years ago a friend was devastated when a daughter was born with a cleft palate. When she went to Primary Children's Hospital for the surgery, he felt crushed and defeated. After the surgery his daughter was placed in a ward with all kinds of people who would never get better. His daughter was better with a simple surgery, but those he saw would carry the burden for a lifetime. He went home saying, "I no longer had any problems." Maybe you are one of those who carries a lifetime of disability or illness. Our heart goes out to you, but even in those times know that the Savior will carry your burdens that they may be light. In the hard times count your blessings and not your trials.

108. They Who Carry No Cross Receive No Crown

A cherished ancestor, Hannah Peel, crossed the plains by handcart with the Martin handcart company. They faced many trials, and Hannah's husband John died close to Martin's Cove just before the rescue party arrived. As she was feeding her husband who was in the throes of death, he clenched and bit off his wife's thumb in the process just before he died. Hannah carried that cross with her for the rest of her life. She stayed strong in the gospel and would often share these words: "They who carry no cross receive no crown." There are crosses to bear of sorrow and grief, of illness and misfortune, of dashed dreams, and challenges to bear until we don't know how to carry on. The courage to walk forward in faith in the midst of adversity is a cross that we can carry through faith in our Savior, even Jesus the Christ. **He bore His cross perfectly, thus He knows how to carry us as we bear our crosses which are much lighter than His. Let us always remember His invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)**

109. Have You Ever Pushed a Handcart?

The coldest I ever remember feeling was a fall morning moving sprinkler pipe. My shoes were worn out at the end of the season so I was moving pipe in my bare feet. What I didn't realize was that snow had fallen overnight and I had to move the pipe through the snow without shoes. To this day I remember my feet freezing in the cold. I received a small glimpse of what our forebears went through. In the trek across the plains they walked for days, many with feet that had turned black due to frostbite. Many had received only four ounces of flour for rations each day and many of the men gave that to their children and spouses. Those were trying times which tested men's souls. Today we do not have to push handcarts, but we still face trying times in a difficult world. Just as our forebears were resolute in times of adversity so must we be. It has been said that successful people do things they don't like to do but they do them anyway because they know that those things are necessary for success. It is said that smooth seas do not a skilled mariner make. **We need to have trials and challenges to develop our faith, courage and perseverance to face and navigate the storms of life successfully.** This song reflects on the sacrifices and trials of those early pioneers.

Have You Ever Pushed a Handcart?

Have you ever pushed a handcart on a dusty mountain trail?
Have you ever walked through snow with frozen feet?
Have you ever suffered from hunger? Have you ever lost your way?
Have you ever felt alone and knelt to pray?

There were many pushing handcarts in that fateful trying hour.
They had struggled facing death on every side.
When they faced the raging waters, their great hearts were torn again.
They felt helpless and defeated and they cried.

1st Chorus

Dear Lord, they cried in agony. We've come too far to fail.
Our strength is gone, our courage too, we've given now our all.
A miracle we ask dear Lord, please come now to our aid.
We beg for mercy now dear Lord, our lives and souls to save.

In a tender heroic moment, three young men to rescue came
And they carried on their shoulders all the lame.
They were valiant in their service and they carried well their cross
As they went to search and find those who were lost.

2nd chorus

We honor now those pioneers, their sacrifice for us.
It's our turn now to carry on, to move the work along.
The time has come for us to share the treasure's we've been giv'n.
To serve and lift our fellow man, then enter into heav'n. RTS

110. In the Water With Us

Chieko N. Okazaki offered a wonderful insight about the Savior and His intervention on our behalf. She said: "Christ is in the river with us, not standing on the shore. He is the master of wind and wave, the creator of the river and the falls. He can walk on the water and command the storms to obey him. Yet he is in the water with us, feeling the batterings of the same current. He lends us his strength so we can try. He gives us his vision so we can see the shore. He whispers encouragement in our ears. When we are exhausted, his arm is there for us to lean on. It may be true that we can always do more-- but not because we have no limits. It's because he has none." **True it is that we are saved after all we can do. Not because we are strong, but because He is strong and has tread the winepress alone, that we may overcome our trials and challenges, whatever they may be, because He showed the way.**

111. I Give You Back to God

In the classic novel “Les Miserables,” written by Victor Hugo in 1861, is found a classic message delivered by Bishop Myriel. Jean ValJean had been sentenced to 19 years of hard labor in prison for stealing a loaf of bread. Upon his release no one would speak to him until he came to the monastery of Bishop Myriel. Upon leaving, Jean ValJean stole some of the expensive utensils only to be apprehended and returned to the monastery. Jean ValJean was sure he was headed back to prison but the gracious bishop said that he had given them to Jean ValJean and had the officers go away for some refreshments. After they were gone he gave this wonderful counsel: **“Don’t ever forget you’ve promised to become a new man Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil, with this silver I’ve bought your soul, I’ve ransomed you from fear and hatred. Now I give you back to God.”** With that fresh start Jean ValJean was indeed able to establish a new start and he accomplished much good in the years to follow. Just as Jean ValJean was ransomed from evil by the kindness of Bishop Myriel, we are ransomed from evil by the precious blood of Christ, who purchased our souls with His blood, which is mighty to cleanse us from all sin and to become alive again, healed from fear and hatred to be filled with the great gift of charity for our brothers and sisters here upon the earth.

112. It’s Not Over

Through the years we have seen many parents who feel that their children are lost because they have chosen to leave the covenant path. The Lord’s message to them is: **There is always hope; it’s not over.** We may feel that all may be lost but as long as we have faith and hope and continue to pray for our children and loved ones there is always hope. And what happens if we give up? We have a loving Father who knows and loves each of us individually and who will continue to show love and hope long after we may have given up. Of course we all have our free agency and some will choose not to return back to our Heavenly home but the possibilities lie far beyond our limited capacity to comprehend. The best we can do is to never give up and always have hope. That is the eternal view of things and offers the greatest hope and opportunity for us to fulfill our divine destiny.

113. The Airplane Takes Off Against the Wind

“When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.” (Henry Ford). When you consider the principles of aerodynamics, it seems miraculous that an object made of metal, such as a plane, can generate enough thrust and lift with a small propeller to overcome the effects of weight and drag to fly! If there were no resistance generated by going into the wind, so to speak, airplanes would struggle to ever get off the ground. That principle of resistance generating lift is so similar to the challenges we face in life. Our challenges are designed to lift us higher and higher as we understand the purpose and role of resistance in our lives. As you face challenges, consider the positives and not only the negatives of the trials that lie before you. Just as the airplane needs resistance to climb, so do we, as we walk along the pathway of life, gaining and growing from each experience that helps to refine and to strengthen us as we travel the pathway of life.

114. Don't Look Back!

Do you remember through history as the Children of Israel left Egypt? They were always looking back to what they thought were better times. Even though they had been in slavery and were headed to the promised land they still wanted to keep one foot in Egypt instead of stepping forward into the unknown. So it may be with us in our lives. When we are facing challenges there is a tendency to look back to a time when things were going smoothly. The truth is, we can look back but we can't go back, for it will never be the same. Instead of looking backward, the pioneers faced forward with faith, hope and courage that carried them through unbelievable difficulties to establish a great colonizing effort in the West. Looking forward and acting in the present are the keys to developing successful patterns in our lives. **The next time you are tempted to look back, square your shoulders, plant your feet and march forward confidently in the direction of your dreams.**

115. Lord Forgive Me When I Whine

We truly have been blessed with so much but often it seems like the grass is greener on the other side of the hill. Someone has this or that of something that is better than what we have. In this world we live in, gratitude and thankfulness help us to recognize the wonderful gifts that we have received. We live at an incredible time in the history of the world. Nearly every convenience that we can think of has been provided for us. Think of those who may be refugees, who live in hunger most of their lives. We have educational and transportation opportunities and families who love and care about us. **This poem shares the thought that the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the hill.**

Lord Forgive Me When I Whine

I met a girl with golden hair, I envied her, she seemed so gay;
But when she arose to leave She had one leg and wore a crutch...
I stopped to buy some candy, The lad who sold it had such charm...
And as I left he said to me, "I thank you, you've been so kind.
You see," he said, "I'm blind."
Later down the street I saw a child with eyes of blue,
"Why don't you join the others? He looked ahead without a word,
and then I knew he couldn't hear,
Oh God forgive me when I whine, I have two ears, the world is mine.
With feet to take me where I'd go, with eyes to see the sunsets glow.
With ears to hear what I would know. Oh God, forgive me when I whine.
I've been blessed indeed, the world is mine. Author Unknown

116. Facing Hard Times

Many of us face difficult circumstances at one time or another. Usually those trials pass, but sometimes they persist with us throughout our lives. The great ones have always faced trials. The apostle Paul was given 39 stripes or whipped 39 times. Once he was stoned, three times he was beaten with rods and three times shipwrecked. He remained true to the faith. The prophet Joseph Smith suffered from Typhus as a young boy, later was tarred and feathered, lost multiple children shortly after birth, spent six months in Liberty jail and was imprisoned on multiple other occasions, and finally sealed his testimony with his blood. Stillman Pond was one of the early members of the Quorum of the Seventy. Crossing the plains he lost nine children to malaria, complications of childbirth and so on, and also lost his wife. He did not quit or lose faith. He became one of the colonizers of the early pioneers. **Reflecting on hard times one needs only to look at the perfect example of the Savior and the infinite suffering that He bore in the Garden of Gethsemane for you and for me.** Whatever our trials may be, if we endure them well, they will eventually be consecrated for our gain.

117. Don't Give Up Your Free Agency!

I saw a man recently the other day who came in for treatment of a variety of symptoms. He made the remark that he had been trying to quit smoking for years but had been unable to do so. He stated that he no longer enjoyed smoking but he was addicted. Likewise, many suffer from the addictions of drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling and a variety of other vices that leads to a loss of agency and to addiction. Of course there is always the healing power of the atonement, but for many individuals these addictions affect their ability to choose during the remainder of their lives due to the overpowering addictions which they have become involved with. When we are free from addictions we are free to choose to follow the path of progress. It has been said that we are free to make our choices but we are not free to choose the consequences of our choices, for they will follow according to natural and eternal laws. Before you ever take that first step to try drugs, alcohol, tobacco, pornography or any other addiction, ask yourself, "Where will this lead?" Satan would disguise many of these products which could addict us as being appealing, satisfying and fulfilling, but the opposite is true. These addictions will enslave us and lead us into a downward spiral of poor health, shattered relationships, and loss of the spirit that we each need so desperately in our lives. **Hold onto your free agency of choice as the priceless gift that it is and you will be blessed all the days of your life.**

118. Don't Be Too Hard on Yourself

Each of us falls down at times. It is part of life. When we do fail at a task or assignment Satan would have us become discouraged and give up. Too many of us are so critical of ourselves that we become our own worst enemy. Yes, sometimes we are too easy on ourselves and rationalize away our failures; but probably most of the time we beat ourselves up to the point that we don't want to go on. There is a balance to be found. Be hard enough on yourself to recognize what you need to do to improve, but easy enough to have the faith and determination to go on toward success. If you can listen to the spirit you will know how to find the proper balance and hasten the learning process, or know when it is time to go a different direction. Coaches who achieve excellence are usually demanding of their players, but also motivated to recognize and reward improvement. The balance in parenting is a delicate one. One thing to remember is that we cannot relate to everyone in the same way. Some respond better to one approach and another to almost the exact opposite teaching. Some people are visual learners, others learn by verbal or written instructions. **When you find yourself getting down, don't be too hard on yourself. Get up and dust off your pants, then start over with a clearer vision and focus and eventually you will find success.**

119. Hearts Were Hardened, Hearts Were Softened

At the end of the Book of Alma the observation was made that "Because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened because of the exceedingly great length of the war; and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility." (Alma 62:41). I have spoken with some of those who have been involved in war and hearts are indeed hardened or softened. Some are taught to avoid caring and to avoid deepening relationships for they may be gone tomorrow. Others, on the other hand, come to understand the precious gift of life and liberty and that we must make whatever sacrifices are necessary to protect those great gifts. We can learn much from the experience of Nephi and of his brothers Laman and Lemuel. Nephi became tender and humble through his afflictions and he turned toward the Lord in faith to the accomplishment of many great things. Laman and Lemuel, however, became hardened to the point that they became past feeling and did not recognize or obey the promptings of the spirit in their lives. In our day there are many who suffer illness or loss and through that time of trial we can go one of two directions: We can become teachable and humble, willing to submit to all things that we are called to pass through or we can become hardened and turn away from the Lord and weaken our faith. Oh, that we may be as Job and not let our integrity depart from us. His testimony echoes through the ages. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in the flesh shall I see God." (Job 19:25-26).

120. Count Your Blessings

It seems that life is filled with challenges and circumstances that discourage us. If we listen to the news we may wonder if anything good ever happens. As we look for balance in life it may appear that we are always on the negative side of the ledger, but there are many good and wonderful things in life. If we count our blessings we find that we are truly rich indeed. Counting our blessings helps us to focus on the good, the positive, the truly worthwhile things in life. Many years ago J. Oatman Jr. wrote a wonderful hymn with a message of hope and inspiration for each of us. The words of "Count Your Blessings" gives us a reminder to look for and to recognize the hand of God in our lives.

Count Your Blessings

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,

Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care? Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?

Count your many blessings; every doubt will fly and you will be singing as the days go by.

When you look at others with their lands and gold, think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold.

Count your many blessings; money cannot buy, your reward in heaven nor your home on high.

So amid the conflict, whether great or small, do not be discouraged; God is over all.

Count your many blessings; angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Chorus

Count your blessings; Name them one by one.

Count your blessings; See what God hath done.

Count your blessings; Name them one by one.

Count your many blessings; See what God hath done. (J Oatman Jr.)

121. Slay Your Goliaths

The account is told of a father and son who went on an outing to the mountains. While they were there the son decided to move a large rock to build a fort. He struggled and struggled and was unable to move the rock even an inch. In defeat he said, "I can't do it." The father asked, "Have you done everything you could?" The son replied "yes." The father then said, "Did you ask me to help you?" With the father's help they easily moved the rock. So it is with us. There are things in this life that try as we may we are unable to do alone. It may be something physical that we are unable to move, or lift, or do. It may be some physical ailment that we are unable to overcome. Our challenge may be mental in some class that we are unable to comprehend or some problem that we are unable to solve. Our challenge may be social where we find ourselves intimidated and unable to step forward with confidence. Lastly, our challenge may be spiritual where there is some sin we are unable to overcome or some spiritual quality in which we find ourselves lacking. **Even as our challenges tower over us, if we step forward in faith in His power we can do all things and overcome all challenges.** This song reflects thoughts about facing our Goliaths in life.

Slay Your Goliaths

I sat one day with a lad on my knee and told him the story of old;
Of David and Goliath, the small against the great as measured by strength of men.
And he looked me right square in the eye and he said; Why aren't there Goliaths today?
Where can be found men with faith as David had, and where are those battles so great?

I thought of this world we live in today with pressures and trials so great.
Like one against an army of evil pulling down, there standing midst foes on all sides.
Then I thought of the strength that I see in our youth, with courage and strength to o'ercome.
To fight the battles and foes we meet today, we each have Goliaths to slay.

Chorus: after 2nd and 3rd verses

Go and slay your goliaths, God will give you strength.
Reach down deep inside, you'll find that pillar of faith,
Shrink not from your trials, remember David's quest.
So strike with your might that foe you see.
Yes, slay your Goliaths today.
(Final) Yes, slay your Goliaths today.

And so you see that Goliaths we'll meet, the same as did David of old.
Our trials may tower o'er us and seem as ten feet tall, o'erpowering and pressing us down.
But remember that we in our trials lay claim to strength that is greater than man's.
There are no battles we cannot overcome, if we take the armour of God. RTS

122. Make Technology Your Servant, Not Your Master

I once spoke with a lady who complained of being tired. She was in her late 60's and I asked what the reason was. She said, "Oh, I was playing my video game until 2:00 AM this morning." Technology provides the miracle of knowledge at our fingertips but we must learn to use it wisely. We must remember that personal relationships are more important than relationships with things. We must remember that fantastic good can be obtained through the internet but also sordid evil. In some missions more missionaries were returning home because of addictions to electronic devices than for any other reason. Are you OK if you turn off your electronic device for a day? **THE SIMPLE QUESTION IS, DO YOU CONTROL TECHNOLOGY OR DO YOU FIND IT CONTROLLING YOU?** Are you able to find the balance of some use on the internet to be used for uplifting purposes, but then use the rest of the day involved with those around you in personal interactions with them. We have great tools at our disposal, either for good or for evil. Let's use those tools as they were intended; for our good, for our growth, and happiness. Let us be careful that they do not become the end goal of all that we do.

123. Every Rose Has a Thorn

The experience is related of three passersby as they admired a wonderful rose. "Oh my," said the first, "It has a petal that is wilting." The second likewise stated, "It has a thorn that pricked me." The third, after looking at the rose, removed the wilting petal and clipped the small thorn and was left with a beautiful rose. It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Too often we see the negative detail in a beautiful arrangement or relationship. Focus on the negative blinds our eyes to the positive. If one listens to the news, very little of it is positive. If you don't want to be discouraged, don't listen to the news for six months. Even as we approach marriage, if we desire total perfection we will usually be disappointed. If we can learn to overlook some of the little faults in others perhaps they will be inclined to overlook our faults. If we stop focusing on the mote in others and focus on the beams in our own lives we will come to see things much more clearly as they really are. Do we look for the negative or the positive in our lives? Do we see the natural beauty in nature, and in others, or do we bemoan the small things that are not quite to our liking? There is beauty in individuality and uniqueness. The next time you look at a rose, focus on the beauty of the rose and not its small thorns. **When you look at others, see them as who they can become as the Savior sees them, and you will be well on your way along the path that leads to charity and seeing the world through our Heavenly Father's eyes.**

124. Make Lemonade

There are times in life when your adventures do not turn out quite the way you would like them to. On those occasions, as Elder Uchtdorf says, "Come what may, and love it!" If at times life deals you a lemon, don't quit; go ahead and make lemonade. Oftimes those adventures may yield greater fruit and experience than the one you had planned initially. We can gain from every experience of life if we approach it in the right attitude. It is in staying positive and looking for the silver lining that we may find hidden treasures. If we make the best we can of every situation we will indeed find that our lives are much fuller and happier. Just as Columbus was disappointed that he did not find the West Indies, he came upon a much greater treasure. Helen Keller was dealt a hard hand in life but she became the champion of countless thousands as she persevered through the challenges of being deaf and blind. Sometimes we don't do the best we can with each situation, but chances are we'll face similar circumstances in the future. **So the next time you are dealt with a lemon in life, sit back and make some lemonade, then see what adventure still lies ahead.**

125. This is An Hard Saying

As the Savior completed his teaching about His being the bread of life in John 6:60, some of the disciples said: "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" There are many times in life when we may face "an hard saying." It may come as we receive severe criticism or receive news of imminent death or disability. It may come when we receive counsel from church leaders which differs from our own natural opinions. Certainly it was "an hard saying" when Abraham was instructed to offer up his only son Isaac upon the altar. When we come to those hard moments we can take counsel in the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith: "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire." When we are faced with those hard moments, let us respond as Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68-69).

126. You Can't Go Back

The noted novelist, C. S. Lewis shared a wonderfully insightful perspective about life: **"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."** The understanding that the past is in the past and we can learn from it to act in the present is a powerful message. Much time is wasted considering "what might have been" instead of focusing on what is and changing it for the better. How often do we keep beating ourselves up for past mistakes instead of using our energy to resolve the challenges that face us in the here and now? It is good at times to reflect to gain a deeper understanding of our current status and to prepare a plan to do better tomorrow. Today is the day of action, today is the day of purpose, today is the day to resolve and to step forward in faith and courage to face the challenges that confront us. Sometimes it's good to have a short memory to not dwell so much on the past. Sometimes it is good to have a longer memory to place into proper focus our current situation and then to act better today than we did yesterday. Isn't that what life is all about, doing better today than we did yesterday and doing better tomorrow than we do today? That is one of the great discoveries of life that will propel us forward on a steady climb if we will but follow that advice.

127. When Bad Things Happen to Good People

There are many circumstances in life which are difficult to understand. Think of Abel, Adam and Eve's faithful son. He was killed by his brother Cain who desired to get gain. One lesson we can learn from Abel is that the riches of eternity are greater than any blessings of mortality. Think of young Joseph, the son of Jacob or Israel. He was a goodly young man who was sold into Egypt by his brothers as a slave. Did he deserve it? No! But through his trials he remained faithful and found favor with God. He rose to a position of authority in the house of Potiphar only to be betrayed by the lies of Potiphar's wife and cast into prison. Once again he remained faithful and spent years in prison. Finally, he was remembered, and interpreted pharaoh's dream, later becoming second in command to the pharaoh. Think of Job and his struggles; loss of family, health and friends; but he too remained faithful and eventually all things were restored to him. When bad things happen, be it cancer, loss of a job, health or whatever it may be, let us continue faithful, for in the end good will be restored to us again. Finally, think of the Savior, He who was spat upon, reviled, taunted, scourged, and crucified. He was the perfect example of One who is good, suffering bad things to come to Him. And what was the final result of His suffering? He became our Savior and Redeemer, opening the gates of resurrection and eternal life. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8-9). **May we choose to remain faithful, whatever may befall us in life, that we may press toward the high prize of eternal life.**

128. Can You See Inside?

Many people have suffered from dementia, strokes, or other disorders that leave them unable to share what lies inside them. Our hearts go out to them and their families for the agony, the separation, and loneliness they must feel. How hard must it be for a spouse to visit his/her companion in a nursing home and not be recognized, or even treated with anger. Many hearts are broken and scarred with deep wounds. The trial of life appears to have passed for many of these dearly beloved companions and friends, for they can no longer consciously choose their actions. The challenge goes on for those of us who remain; to continue to show love and encouragement along with patience and understanding in the most difficult of situations. This song describes some of the feelings that these dear ones may share if they only could. It may be a poor attempt and the better day will probably not be in this life, but hopefully it gives a thought to consider for those who find themselves in this situation.

Can You See Inside?

Can you see inside beneath the surface, past the shell that others see?
Can you hear the words unspoken, do you know they come from me?
A thousand things I'd tell you if only words would come,
But the silence overwhelms me, all these feelings locked inside.

Can I tell you now that I do love you, though at times it doesn't show?
And I thank you for your kindness, for your gracious tender love.
My body now seems shackled, but one day I'll be free.
Now be patient, understanding; let's hold on now, you and me.

When you come again, please look and listen; there's a part I still can share.
Bring a smile and conversation, for I love your gentle words.
Yes, hand in hand we'll walk through the days that lie ahead.
Now, remember that I love you, please reach out and take my hand.

Chorus:

Yes, look inside, yes, look inside and hear the words unspoken.
You bring a rainbow to my soul, I love to have you near me.
The road is long but must go on, let's journey to the end.
For we shall see a better day, together we will be.
(Final) For we shall see a better day, together we will be. RTS

129. If There Were No Night

“If there were no night, we would not appreciate the day, nor could we see the stars and the vastness of the heavens. We must partake of the bitter with the sweet. There is a divine purpose in the adversities we encounter every day. They prepare, they purge, they purify, and thus they bless.” (James E. Faust). How do we perceive the difficulties, challenges and obstacles that we face during our lives? Do we see them as opportunities to draw closer to God and to understand his purposes, or do we curse them as a punishment to be avoided? May we learn to appreciate the sweet through experiencing the bitter and enjoy both the day and the night as we view the Creator's marvelous kaleidoscope of circumstances that gives us the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to walk along the path that leads back to Him.

130. Nothing in Life Is to Be Feared

The remarkable Madame Marie Curie wrote: **“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood.”** Now is the time to understand more so that we may fear less.” In life, there are many things that people seem to fear but two in particular are the fear of death and the fear of losing. In the Book of Mormon the People of Ammon had no fear of death. “They never did look upon death with any degree of terror, (fear) for their hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death was swallowed up to them by the victory of Christ over it.” (Alma 27:28). Another great fear of many is the fear of losing. When we understand what the game is about, our fear should disappear. We play the game to attain mastery over self, to do the best we can and to learn and to grow; to learn that by overcoming failure we can achieve ultimate success. It isn't all about winning and losing. It is about growing and developing teamwork and doing all we can to win, then accept the outcome whatever it may be. Let us learn to understand more, that we may fear less.

131. Limitations

“Limitations live only in our minds, but if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become endless.” (Jamie Paolinetti). As humans we can be so self limiting, somehow we must learn to reach beyond the mortal to the eternal and then truly infinite potential awaits us. It has been said that anything the mind can conceive the will can achieve. Just as the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary: **“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”** (Luke 1:37). We need to open our minds and expand our horizons to our infinite potential that can be achieved line upon line and precept upon precept. Dreams and imagination become the launching pad to success and fulfillment. Never stop dreaming, and throw off the shackles of self limitation that limit you. Let your possibilities become truly endless.

132. What Can I Learn From This Experience?

There are times in each of our lives when we face unexpected trials or adversity. The Lord causes the rain to fall on the righteous as well as the wicked. We are taught not only to endure trial but to endure it patiently. Trials in our lives become roadblocks or stepping stones depending on how we respond to them. As we endure our trials faithfully we will be able to see the tender mercies of the Lord extended to us to help us make it through. Through adversity we learn patience and to deepen our faith and our reliance on the Lord. When we ask the Lord in prayer to know His will and for the strength to do His will, He will indeed strengthen us. Who among us has not had a greater challenge than we were prepared to meet? In a small sense we each have our own Gethsemane, that trial or challenge that is beyond our natural ability to bear. Even in those times, when we open our spiritual eyes we see that indeed the Lord has carried us and our burdens. He will indeed succor us by coming to our aid even though He was left on the cross to carry that unbearable burden alone. We can gain from every experience of life that we encounter, the good and the positive as well as the trials and sorrows of life. Just as the Savior was faithful in His most trying hour, we can be faithful in our own trying hours, remembering that our trials are insignificant when compared to what the Savior bore in bringing to pass the atonement for all mankind.

133. Be of Good Cheer

As the Savior spent His last evening with his beloved apostles He told them to “Be of good cheer.” He told them of the trials they would face, but gave them this great promise: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33). This verse offers some remarkable insights. First, peace is found in the Savior, Jesus Christ, as he overcame sin through the atonement and opened the doors to eternal life through the resurrection. Second, in this world we will have trials and tribulation. Sooner or later trials come to all of us, for that is the pattern of life. Third, we are to be of good cheer, to experience joy and fulfillment which depends more on what lies inside of us instead of the circumstances around us. Fourth, just as the Savior overcame the world, He also helps us to overcome the world, our challenges, our frustrations, our despair and our frailties. We may have temporary setbacks, but as we are faithful we will ultimately achieve success, through our Lord and Savior. As the Lord spoke in revelation in our day he declared: **“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).