

Episode 2

Stories from General Conference

ATTITUDE

NARRATOR: **Attitude is the topic for this series of “Stories from General Conference”. We can choose what our attitude will be, and it makes all the difference. Cultivating a positive attitude can make our lives happier, not only for ourselves, but for those around us. President James E. Faust shared a children’s story in the October 2002 General Conference which expresses the need to have a positive attitude.**

(President James E. Faust, Priesthood Session, October 2002)

I first heard the wonderful story of *The Little Engine That Could* when I was about 10 years old. As a child, I was interested in the story because the train cars were filled with toy animals, toy clowns, jackknives, puzzles, and books as well as delicious things to eat. However, the engine that was pulling the train over the mountain broke down. The story relates that a big passenger engine came by and was asked to pull the cars over the mountain, but he wouldn't condescend to pull the little train. Another engine came by, but he wouldn't stoop to help the little train over the mountain because he was a freight engine. An old engine came by, but he would not help because, he said, "I am so tired. . . . I can not. I can not. I can not."

Then a little blue engine came down the track, and she was asked to pull the cars over the mountain to the children on the other side. The little engine responded, "I'm not very big. . . . They use me only for switching in the yard. I have never been over the mountain." But she was concerned about disappointing the children on the other side of the mountain if they didn't get all of the goodies in the cars. So she said, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can." And she hooked herself to the little train. "Puff, puff, chug, chug, went the Little Blue Engine. 'I think I can—I think I can.' " With this attitude, the little engine reached the top of the mountain and went down the other side, saying, "I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could."

. . . I hope we can all be like the "Little Engine That Could." It wasn't very big, had only been used for switching cars, and had never been over a mountain, but it was willing. That little engine hooked on to the stranded train, chugged up to the top of the mountain, and puffed down the mountain, saying, "I thought I could." Each of us must climb mountains that we have never climbed before.

NARRATOR:

Like the Little Engine that Could, we all have the power to choose our attitude and how we view the world and those around us. We can choose how we will face those difficult moments in our life. In the October 1999 General Conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared a story about a young father and how placing trust in God can influence our attitude.

(Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Saturday Afternoon Session, October 1999)

Thirty years ago last month, a little family set out to cross the United States to attend graduate school--no money, an old car, every earthly possession they owned packed into less than half the space of the smallest U-Haul trailer available. Bidding their apprehensive parents farewell, they drove exactly 34 miles up the highway, at which point their beleaguered car erupted.

Pulling off the freeway onto a frontage road, the young father surveyed the steam, matched it with his own, then left his trusting wife and two innocent children--the youngest just three months old--to wait in the car while he walked the three miles or so to the southern Utah metropolis of Kanarrville, population then, I suppose, 65. Some water was secured at the edge of town, and a very kind citizen offered a drive back to the stranded family. The car was attended to and slowly--*very* slowly--driven back to St. George for inspection--U-Haul trailer and all.

After more than two hours of checking and rechecking, no immediate problem could be detected, so once again the journey was begun. In exactly the same amount of elapsed time at exactly the same location on that highway with exactly the same pyrotechnics from under the hood, the car exploded again. It could not have been 15 feet from the earlier collapse, probably not 5 feet from it! Obviously the most precise laws of automotive physics were at work.

Now feeling more foolish than angry, the chagrined young father once more left his trusting loved ones and started the long walk for help once again. This time the man providing the water said, "Either you or that fellow who looks just like you ought to get a new radiator for that car." For the second time a kind neighbor offered a lift back to the same automobile and its anxious little occupants. He didn't know whether to laugh or to cry at the plight of this young family.

"How far have you come?" he said. "Thirty-four miles," I answered. "How much farther do you have to go?" "Twenty-six hundred miles," I said. "Well, *you* might make that trip, and *your wife* and those two little kiddies might make that trip, but *none of you* are going to make it in *that* car." He proved to be prophetic on all counts.

Just two weeks ago this weekend, I drove by that exact spot where the freeway turnoff leads to a frontage road, just three miles or so west of Kanarrville, Utah. That same beautiful and loyal wife, my dearest friend and greatest supporter for all these years, was curled up asleep in the seat beside me. The two children in the story, and the little brother who later joined them, have long since grown up and served missions, married perfectly, and are now raising children of their own. The automobile we were driving this time was

modest but very pleasant and very safe. In fact, except for me and my lovely Pat situated so peacefully at my side, nothing of that moment two weeks ago was even remotely like the distressing circumstances of three decades earlier.

Yet in my mind's eye, for just an instant, I thought perhaps I saw on that side road an old car with a devoted young wife and two little children making the best of a bad situation there. Just ahead of them I imagined that I saw a young fellow walking toward Kanarrville, with plenty of distance still ahead of him. His shoulders seemed to be slumping a little, the weight of a young father's fear evident in his pace. In the scriptural phrase his hands did seem to "hang down." In that imaginary instant, I couldn't help calling out to him: "Don't give up, boy. Don't you quit. You keep walking. You keep trying. There is help and happiness ahead--a lot of it--30 years of it now, and still counting. You keep your chin up. It will be all right in the end. Trust God and believe in good things to come."

NARRATOR: Now, Elder Holland can see many blessings that have come into his life since that experience thirty years earlier, when the situation was conspiring against him. But he had hope in the future and had a positive attitude knowing that things would somehow work out. But for many it takes faith on a daily basis to have an attitude of thanksgiving for the blessings bestowed, even amidst, illness, heartache, and pain. In the October 2008 General Conference, President Thomas S. Monson shared the story of Borghild Dahl.

(President Thomas S. Monson, Sunday Morning Session, October 2008)

Many years ago I was touched by the story of Borghild Dahl. She was born in Minnesota in 1890 of Norwegian parents and from her early years suffered severely impaired vision. She had a tremendous desire to participate in everyday life despite her handicap and, through sheer determination, succeeded in nearly everything she undertook. Against the advice of educators, who felt her handicap was too great, she attended college, receiving her bachelor of arts degree from the University of Minnesota. She later studied at Columbia University and the University of Oslo. She eventually became the principal of eight schools in western Minnesota and North Dakota.

She wrote the following in one of the 17 books she authored: "I had only one eye, and it was so covered with dense scars that I had to do all my seeing through one small opening in the left of the eye. I could see a book only by holding it up close to my face and by straining my one eye as hard as I could to the left."

Miraculously, in 1943—when she was over 50 years old—a revolutionary procedure was developed which finally restored to her much of the sight she had been without for so long. A new and exciting world opened up before her. She took great pleasure in the small things most of us take for granted, such as watching a bird in flight, noticing the light reflected in the bubbles of her dishwater, or observing the phases of the moon each

night. She closed one of her books with these words: "Dear . . . Father in heaven, I thank Thee. I thank Thee."

Borghild Dahl, both before and after her sight was restored, was filled with gratitude for her blessings.

In 1982, two years before she died, at the age of 92 her last book was published. Its title: *Happy All My Life*. Her attitude of thankfulness enabled her to appreciate her blessings and to live a full and rich life despite her challenges.

NARRATOR: We don't have to have health related illnesses or miraculous events take place in our lives to enjoy a proper attitude. President James E. Faust shared a simple story of an everyday example during the October 2002 General Relief Society Meeting.

(President James E. Faust, General Relief Society Meeting, October 2002)

A young lady who is very close to me made the following observation: "I am 18 and the youngest member of the Relief Society in our ward. I enjoy going to Relief Society with my mother and grandmother because it is so nice to spend time with them as friends. I like to listen to my mom talk to her friends because it gives me an opportunity to get to know the sisters who are her age. There are several ladies who like to give me a hug and ask me where I am working and what I am doing during the summer. They always make me feel like I am important and special to them. As I have associated with the grandmothers and great-grandmothers in my ward, I have developed new and unique friendships which have enriched and blessed my life. I also like the lessons the older sisters give. They have lived in different locations and their individual experiences have given me better insight on how to handle life's challenges and problems. The stories they share from their own lives are interesting and help me relate to the lesson. I have come to realize that Relief Society truly is for all women, regardless of their ages."

NARRATOR: This young woman understood how others can affect your own attitude. She has realized that much can be learned from others with more experience that can shape your own attitude while still young. In the October 2007 General Conference, President Boyd K. Packer shared another story that illustrates the need to have an attitude that no one is superior to anyone else. We are all children of our Heavenly Father.

(President Boyd K. Packer, Saturday Morning Session, October 2007)

When I was a young man, I was a home teacher to a very old sister. She taught me from her life experience.

When she was a little girl, President Brigham Young came to Brigham City, a great event in the town named after him. To honor him, the Primary children, all dressed in white,

were lined up along the road coming into town, each with a basket of flowers to spread before the carriage of the President of the Church.

Something displeased her. Instead of throwing her blossoms, she kicked a rock in front of the carriage, saying, “He ain’t one bit better than my Grandpa Lovelund.” That was overheard, and she was severely scolded.

I am very sure that President Brigham Young would be the first to agree with little Janie Steed. He would not consider himself to be worth more than Grandpa Lovelund or any other worthy member of the Church.

The Lord Himself was very plain: “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:27). “The same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all” (D&C 50:26).

Years ago when I first received an appointment that resulted in my picture being in the newspapers, one of my high school teachers, evidently quite astonished, was heard to say, “That just proves that you can’t tell by looking at a frog how high he is going to jump!”

The image of that frog, sitting in the mud instead of jumping, illustrates how inadequate I have felt when facing the responsibilities that have come to me.

These feelings fix it so that thereafter one can never feel superior to anyone, not anyone.

NARRATOR:

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin learned to find joy in any experience, even in those experiences that may be difficult to find the positive. Elder Wirthlin shared this story in the October 2008 General Conference.

(Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, Saturday Afternoon Session, October 2008)

I remember loading up our children in a station wagon and driving to Los Angeles. There were at least nine of us in the car, and we would invariably get lost. Instead of getting angry, we laughed. Every time we made a wrong turn, we laughed harder.

Getting lost was not an unusual occurrence for us. Once while heading south to Cedar City, Utah, we took a wrong turn and didn’t realize it until two hours later when we saw the “Welcome to Nevada” signs. We didn’t get angry. We laughed, and as a result, anger and resentment rarely resulted. Our laughter created cherished memories for us.

I remember when one of our daughters went on a blind date. She was all dressed up and waiting for her date to arrive when the doorbell rang. In walked a man who seemed a little old, but she tried to be polite. She introduced him to me and my wife and the other children; then she put on her coat and went out the door. We watched as she got into the car, but the car didn’t move. Eventually our daughter got out of the car and, red faced, ran back into the house. The man that she thought was her blind date had actually come to pick up another of our daughters who had agreed to be a babysitter for him and his wife.

We all had a good laugh over that. In fact, we couldn't stop laughing. Later, when our daughter's real blind date showed up, I couldn't come out to meet him because I was still in the kitchen laughing. Now I realize that our daughter could have felt humiliated and embarrassed. But she laughed with us, and as a result, we still laugh about it today.

The next time you're tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable.

NARRATOR: We individually choose our attitude. It doesn't matter if the *situation* is good or bad, but it's how we approach it. There's an old saying, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." When we center our lives in the gospel of Christ we have every reason to rejoice with a positive attitude. Thank you for listening to the Mormon Channel.