

Episode 17

Stories from General Conference

FAITH

NARRATOR: This is “Stories From General Conference.” The topic for this episode of “Stories from General Conference” is faith. The Bible Dictionary in the LDS edition of the Bible says that “Faith is a principle of action and power.” It continues by saying that “although faith is a gift, it must be cultured and sought after until it grows from a tiny seed to a great tree.” It is cultured by following the commandments of God. The Bible Dictionary also says that “faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel and is more than belief, since true faith always moves its possessor to some kind of physical and mental action; it carries an assurance of the fulfillment of the things hoped for.”

From this we learn that faith is an action that leads to knowledge. President James E. Faust shared a story in the October 1997 General Conference of a young boy in Nauvoo whose faith resulted in a great blessing.

(President James E. Faust, Sunday Morning Session, October 1997)

“The childlike faith of a follower of the divine Christ is a choice spiritual gift. It can be enjoyed by young and old. In the early days of the Church, a young boy by the name of Will Cluff, 10 years of age, living in Nauvoo, had a remarkable, pure faith. He had an experience to which many of us can relate.

His family was poor and had only one cow which they depended on for food. In the spring of 1842 the cow strayed off. One evening in August his father came home very weary and discouraged. He and Will's brothers had spent much of the summer looking for the cow. Will said, "Father, if you will let me take Charley (an old horse) I will go and find the cow." He reluctantly said he could.

Early next morning Will rode to the Big Mound, three miles east and in the prairie country. Here he had often herded cows with other boys from Nauvoo. He got off the horse and, holding it by the bridle, knelt down and fervently prayed the Lord to direct him which way to go to find the cow. He climbed back on the horse and rode south, a course he was impressed to take even though there were numerous bunches of cattle in every direction.

After traveling a few miles in the open prairie and passing hundreds of cattle, Will came to a fence. He dismounted and let down the stake, led his horse in, put up the fence, then rode three miles across the field. He again found himself in the open prairie with numerous bunches of stock in every direction. When he had gone about a quarter of a

mile from the field, he rode right on to the cow, feeding alone some distance from any other animals.

Will started to drive the cow in the direction of the city. He arrived late in the evening full of joy and thankful to his Father in Heaven.”

NARRATOR: Little Will Cluff prayed with faith knowing he would get an answer. And he did. A modern example of a young woman’s faith was related by Sister Janette Hales Beckham in the October 1997 General Conference.

(Janette Hales Beckham, Sunday Afternoon Session, October 1997)

“Being a witness of the faith of young people has increased my faith. One young mother wrote:

"When I was 13 I knew my life was not worth living. I was living in an abusive home where there never seemed to be lasting happiness. My two best friends told me they didn't want to be friends with me anymore because I thought I was too good for them, which made no sense but left me feeling completely alone.

"As the battles in my house continued to rage, I went to my bedroom. I was so scared. I knelt and called to the one person I still knew I had. I pleaded to my Father in Heaven to somehow take me home. I said, 'Father, I need to be with you. I need to feel your arms around me.' As I sat crying and quietly waiting in that desperate moment for Heavenly Father's arms to reach down, I heard a voice, 'Put your arms around yourself, and I will be with you.' As I followed that prompting, I felt Heavenly Father's love assure me that I could go on, and I would go on and I was not alone."

At a difficult time, this young woman turned to Heavenly Father. Her experience made her faith stronger and more real. The reward of her faith is evident in her temple marriage and family life today (see Alma 32:42-43).”

NARRATOR: There is a power in faith that gives us strength to continue toward our righteous goals. In the April 2000 General Conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland related a story from pioneer days that illustrates this principle.

(Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Sunday Afternoon Session, April 2000)

John R. Moyle lived in Alpine, Utah, about 22 miles as the crow flies to the Salt Lake Temple, where he was the chief superintendent of masonry during its construction. To make certain he was always at work by 8 o'clock, Brother Moyle would start walking about 2 a.m. on Monday mornings. He would finish his work week at 5 p.m. on Friday

and then start the walk home, arriving there shortly before midnight. Each week he would repeat that schedule for the entire time he served on the construction of the temple.

Once when he was home on the weekend, one of his cows bolted during milking and kicked Brother Moyle in the leg, shattering the bone just below the knee. With no better medical help than they had in such rural circumstances, his family and friends took a door off the hinges and strapped him onto that makeshift operating table. They then took the bucksaw they had been using to cut branches from a nearby tree and amputated his leg just a few inches below the knee. When against all medical likelihood the leg finally started to heal, Brother Moyle took a piece of wood and carved an artificial leg. First he walked in the house. Then he walked around the yard. Finally he ventured out about his property. When he felt he could stand the pain, he strapped on his leg, walked the 22 miles to the Salt Lake Temple, climbed the scaffolding, and with a chisel in his hand hammered out the declaration "Holiness to the Lord."

NARRATOR: Following is another story of faith. This account took place in Samoa, and illustrates how faith can provide strength which can then be translated into action. This story was related by President James E. Faust in the April 2001 General Conference.

(President James E. Faust, Sunday Morning Session, April 2001)

Some years ago Albert Peters told of the experience he and his companion had of a man being born again. One day they went to the hut of Atiati in the village of Sasina in Samoa. There they found an unshaven, unkempt, misshapen man lying on a bed. He asked them to come in and introduce themselves. He was pleased to know they were missionaries and wanted to hear their message. They presented the first discussion, bore witness to him, and then left. As they walked away, they discussed Atiati's condition; he had had polio 22 years before that had left him without the use of his arms or legs, so how could he ever be baptized, being so completely disabled?

When they visited their new friend the next day, they were unprepared for the change in Atiati. He was bright and clean-shaven; even his bedding had been changed. "Today," he said, "I begin to live again, because yesterday my prayers were answered and you [came] to me. . . . I have waited for more than twenty years for someone to come and tell me that they have the true gospel of Christ."

For several weeks the two missionaries taught this sincere, intelligent man the principles of the gospel, and he received a strong witness of the truth and the need for baptism. He asked them to fast with him so that he would have the strength to go down into the water and be baptized. The nearest baptismal font was eight miles away. So they carried him to their car, drove him to the chapel, and set him on a bench. Their district leader opened the service by bearing a strong testimony about the sacred ordinance of baptism. Then Elder Peters and his companion picked up Atiati and carried him to the font. As they did so, Atiati said, "Please, put me down." They hesitated, and he said again, "Put me down."

As they stood in some confusion, Atiati smiled and exclaimed: "This is the most important event in my life. I know without a doubt in my mind that this is the only way to eternal salvation. *I will not be carried to my salvation!*" So they lowered Atiati to the ground. After a huge effort, he managed to pull himself up. The man who had lain 20 years without moving was now standing. Slowly, one shaky step at a time, Atiati went down the steps and into the water, where the astonished missionary took him by the hand and baptized him. He then asked to be carried from the font to the chapel, where he was confirmed a member of the Church.

Atiati continued to progress so that he gained the ability to walk only by a cane. He told Elder Peters that he knew that he would be able to walk on the morning of his baptism. He said, "Since faith can move a stubborn mountain, I had no doubt in my mind that it would mend these limbs of mine." I believe we can say that Atiati was truly born again!

NARRATOR: **Faith requires us to place our trust in the Lord. The following analogy was related by Elder W. Craig Zwick in the October 2003 General Conference.**

(Elder W. Craig Zwick, Saturday Afternoon, October 2003)

We can never complete "the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1) without placing our hand in the Lord's.

Several years ago, our only daughter decided to compete in a marathon. She trained and worked very hard, along with some of her friends. The race was difficult, and there were times when she wanted to quit. But she kept going, just concentrating on one step at a time. As she was approaching the middle part of the course, she heard someone behind her shout out, "Blind man on your left."

She turned her head only to see a blind man overtake her, holding the hand of another man. They were both running the race. As they passed, she could see how tightly the blind man held the hand of his friend.

Overcome with her own physical pain, she was lifted as she watched these two men run hand in hand. He who could see was motivated by his blind friend, and the blind man depended upon the connection he had to his friend's hand. Our daughter knew the blind man could never finish the race alone. She was inspired by the trust of the blind man and the devoted love of his friend.

In like manner, the Savior has stretched forth His hand to each of us so that we don't have to run alone. "To those [of us] who [occasionally] stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen" (*Trusting Jesus*, 43). As we advance toward the finish line, He will be there to save us; and for all this He gave His life.

NARRATOR:

One manifestation of faith can result in miracles. Sister Sydney S. Reynolds shared a story in the April 2001 General Conference that explains how the combined faith of family and friends helped a set of twins who were born prematurely.

(Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, Saturday Morning Session, April 2001)

Our daughter and her husband took a while to find each other and then, though they wanted children with all their hearts, over a number of years had difficulty realizing that dream. They prayed and they sought priesthood blessings and medical help, and eventually were thrilled to learn they were expecting twins.

Things did not go smoothly, however, and three and a half months before the babies were due to arrive, the mother-to-be found herself in the labor and delivery section of the hospital. The doctors at first were hopeful that they could stop the labor for a few more weeks. Quickly, however, the question became, would they even have the 48 hours necessary for medication to prepare the babies' immature lungs to function?

A nurse came in from the newborn intensive care unit to show the couple pictures of the machines the babies would be hooked up to if they were born alive. She explained the risks for eye damage, for lung collapse, for physical impairment, for brain damage. The couple listened, humbled yet hopeful, and then, despite all the doctors could do, it was obvious that these babies were coming.

They were born alive. First the baby girl and then the baby boy—weighing less than four pounds together—were rushed to the intensive care unit and put on ventilators, with umbilical tubes and intravenous lines and constant attention. They can't have too much light, they can't have too much noise, their chemical balances need constant monitoring, as the hospital, with millions of dollars of equipment and many wonderful doctors and nurses, attempted to replicate the miracle of a mother's womb.

There are multitudes of little miracles every day: a collapsed lung heals and then, despite the odds, continues to function properly; pneumonia is beaten back; more deadly infections invade and are overcome; IV lines go bad and are replaced. After two and a half months, the baby boy has gained two pounds and can breathe with an oxygen supplement. His ventilator is gone, he learns to eat, and his grateful parents take him home with monitors attached.

The baby girl keeps pulling her ventilator tube out, setting off alarms across the nursery. Maybe she wants to keep up with her brother, we think, but her throat closes off each time, and she just can't breathe on her own. Her throat is so inflamed that at times the respiratory therapists have great difficulty reinserting the tube, and she almost dies. Her normal progress is stymied by her continued dependence on the ventilator.

Finally, after her baby brother has been home for two months, the doctors feel they are forced to suggest surgery for her—a surgery that will allow her to breathe by opening a hole in her throat, a surgery that might solve the stomach problems by opening a hole in her side, but a surgery that will impact her little body for many more months and maybe

for the rest of her life. As the parents wrestled with this decision, a beloved aunt sent a message to all the family. She explained the situation—the critical issue of timing, the importance of getting off the ventilator—and suggested that we join our faith once again, and in prayer and fasting ask for one more miracle—if it was the Lord's will. We would culminate our fast with a prayer the evening of December 3.

Let me read from a letter that was sent to the family the morning of December 4.

"Dearest Family, Wonderful news! Blessings from the Lord. Our heartfelt thanks for your prayers and fasting in behalf of our little girl. Yesterday morning she came off the ventilator and has been off for 24 hours at this writing. To us, it is a miracle. The medical staff are still guarded about predicting the future, but we are so grateful to the Lord and to you. We are praying that this will mark the beginning of the end of her hospital stay. And we even dare to hope that she'll be home for Christmas."

She did make it home for Christmas, and both babies are currently doing "just fine." Our family has had its own "parting of the Red Sea," and we are prepared to testify that there is today, as there was yesterday and will be forever, a "God of miracles" who loves His children and desires to bless them.

Now, we know, as you do, that all petitions to the Lord and all fasts do not receive this same hoped-for answer. Our extended family also has faced the death of loved ones, serious illness, the trial of divorce, and children who are choosing another path. We do not always understand the reasons behind the tests that come with mortality. But our faith has grown, and perhaps yours has too, as we have watched loved ones, friends, and people we know only by reputation endure with faith in the Lord the most severe trials. They, too, know the God of miracles and witness in their extremity that whatever the future holds for them, the Lord knows them and loves them and is blessing them. They are sealed to Him and to each other forever, and they are willing to submit their wills to His.

NARRATOR: Sometimes faith can manifest itself in the sacrifices people are willing to make. To illustrate this, Sister Anne C. Pingree shared the following story in the October 2003 General Conference about an experience in Nigeria.

(Sister Anne C. Pingree, Saturday Morning Session, October 2003)

I will never forget a sauna-hot day in the lush rain forest of southeastern Nigeria. My husband and I had traveled to one of the most remote locations in our mission so he could conduct temple recommend interviews with members in the Ikot Eyo district. Some in this growing district had been Church members less than two years. All the members lived 3,000 miles away from the nearest temple in Johannesburg, South Africa. None had received their temple endowment.

These members knew the appointed day each month we would come to their district, but even we didn't know the exact hour we would arrive; nor could we call, for telephones

were rare in that part of West Africa. So these committed African Saints gathered early in the morning to wait all day if necessary for their temple recommend interviews. When we arrived, I noticed among those waiting in the searing heat were two Relief Society sisters dressed in bold-patterned wrappers, white blouses, and the traditional African head-ties.

Many hours later, after all the interviews were completed, as my husband and I drove back along that sandy jungle trail, we were stunned when we saw these two sisters still walking. We realized they had trekked from their village—a distance of 18 miles round trip—just to obtain a temple recommend they knew they would never have the privilege of using.

These Nigerian Saints believed the counsel of President Howard W. Hunter: "It would please the Lord for every adult member to be worthy of—and to carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it." In her hand, carefully wrapped in a clean handkerchief, each sister carried her precious temple recommend. I carry their examples of faith carefully wrapped in my heart.

These two covenant Relief Society sisters embody the meaning of Alma's teaching "concerning faith—faith is *not* to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye *hope* for things which are *not seen*, which are *true*."

NARRATOR:

Our faith can motivate us to make unusual and dramatic sacrifices. President James E. Faust shared the following story of such faith during the October 2006 General Conference.

(President James E. Faust, Saturday Morning Session, October 2006)

In the early days of the Church in Mexico, two faithful leaders who were disciples of Christ became martyrs because of their belief. The two whose lives were taken were Rafael Monroy and Vicente Morales.

During the Mexican Revolution, Rafael Monroy was the president of the small San Marcos Mexico Branch, and Vicente Morales was his first counselor. On July 17, 1915, they were apprehended by the Zapatistas. They were told they would be spared if they would give up their weapons and renounce their strange religion. Brother Monroy told his captors that he did not have any weapons and simply drew from his pocket his Bible and Book of Mormon. He said, "Gentlemen, these are the only arms I ever carry; they are the arms of truth against error."

When no arms were found, the brethren were cruelly tortured to make them divulge where arms were hidden. But there were no arms. They were then taken under guard to the outskirts of the little town, where their captors stood them up by a large ash tree in front of a firing squad. The officer in charge offered them freedom if they would forsake

their religion and join the Zapatistas, but Brother Monroy replied, "My religion is dearer to me than my life, and I cannot forsake it."

They were then told that they were to be shot and asked if they had any request to make. Brother Rafael requested that he be permitted to pray before he was executed. There, in the presence of his executioners, he kneeled down and, in a voice that all could hear, prayed that God would bless and protect his loved ones and care for the little struggling branch that would be left without a leader. As he finished his prayer, he used the words of the Savior when He hung upon the cross and prayed for his executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." With that the firing squad shot both Brother Monroy and Brother Morales.

Some years ago I went to Mexico to reorganize a stake presidency. As I conducted the interviews, I was privileged to become acquainted with one of the descendants of Rafael Monroy. I was very impressed with the depth of this man's testimony and his commitment to the gospel. When I asked him what had happened to the rest of Brother Monroy's descendants, he said that many of them have been on missions and continue faithful in the Church.

NARRATOR:

Numerous stories of faith and inspired determination provide examples for us all to follow. In the October 2008 General Conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf related a story from his boyhood that illustrates how his mother's faith, coupled with action, brought ultimate peace in a very stressful situation.

(Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Saturday Morning Session, October 2008)

Toward the end of World War II, my father was drafted into the German army and sent to the western front, leaving my mother alone to care for our family. Though I was only three years old, I can still remember this time of fear and hunger. We lived in Czechoslovakia, and with every passing day, the war came nearer and the danger grew greater.

Finally, during the cold winter of 1944, my mother decided to flee to Germany, where her parents were living. She bundled us up and somehow managed to get us on one of the last refugee trains heading west. Traveling during that time was dangerous. Everywhere we went, the sound of explosions, the stressed faces, and ever-present hunger reminded us that we were in a war zone.

Along the way the train stopped occasionally to get supplies. One night during one of these stops, my mother hurried out of the train to search for some food for her four children. When she returned, to her great horror, the train and her children were gone!

She was weighed down with worry; desperate prayers filled her heart. She frantically searched the large and dark train station, urgently crisscrossing the numerous tracks while hoping against hope that the train had not already departed.

Perhaps I will never know all that went through my mother's heart and mind on that black night as she searched through a grim railroad station for her lost children. That she was terrified, I have no doubt. I am certain it crossed her mind that if she did not find this train, she might never see her children again. I know with certainty: her faith overcame her fear, and her hope overcame her despair. She was not a woman who would sit and bemoan tragedy. She moved. She put her faith and hope into action.

And so she ran from track to track and from train to train until she finally found our train. It had been moved to a remote area of the station. There, at last, she found her children again.

I have often thought about that night and what my mother must have endured. If I could go back in time and sit by her side, I would ask her how she managed to go on in the face of her fears. I would ask about faith and hope and how she overcame despair.

NARRATOR: Sometimes when our faith is tried, we may discover it is not God who has wavered, but us. In the October 2002 General Conference, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin provided an analogy from his own experience that illustrates this principle.

(Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, Sunday Afternoon, October 2002)

Sometimes the world appears dark. Sometimes our faith is tried. Sometimes we feel that the heavens are closed against us. Yet we should not despair. We should never abandon our faith. We should not lose hope.

A few years ago, I began to notice that things around me were beginning to darken. It troubled me because simple things like reading the print in my scriptures were becoming more difficult. I wondered what had happened to the quality of the lightbulbs and wondered why manufacturers today couldn't make things like they had in years past.

I replaced the bulbs with brighter ones. They, too, became dim. I blamed the poor design of the lamps and bulbs. I even questioned whether the brightness of the sun was fading before the thought occurred to me that the problem might not be with the amount of light in the room—the problem might be with my own eyes.

Shortly thereafter, I went to an ophthalmologist who assured me that the world was not going dark at all. A cataract on my eye was the reason the light seemed to be fading. This certainly gives you my age. I placed my faith in the capable hands of this trained specialist, the cataract was removed, and behold, light again flooded my life! The light had never diminished; only my capacity to see the light had been lessened.

NARRATOR: May we all exercise our faith to access the blessings of Heaven available to each one of us. As we do so, we will experience joy as we grow closer to our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

This has been Stories from General Conference on the topic of Faith. Thank you for listening to the Mormon Channel.