

Episode 18

Stories from General Conference

FAITH, VOL. 2

NARRATOR: This is “Stories From General Conference.” This is collection number two on the topic of faith in this series of “Stories from General Conference.”

Faith is a principle of power that leads to action. When we choose to center our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, miracles can occur in our lives.

From the pages of the Book of Mormon, Alma teaches us that our faith in Heavenly Father and the Savior will give us hope for things we cannot see, which are true. As we develop faith, our desire to follow their teachings will increase, enriching our lives with greater happiness.

As we take action exercising our faith in Heavenly Father and the Savior, we create a sure foundation that we can build our lives on. In the April 2002 General Conference, Elder Russell M. Nelson provided an analogy about the foundation of a temple that can be applied to our lives.

(Elder Russell M. Nelson, Sunday Afternoon Session, April 2002)

About two decades ago when a temple was to be built in Mexico City, architects faced a great challenge. Because Mexico City is situated on a basin over water, some of its buildings settle and become tilted with the passage of time. Construction of a temple there required a special foundation. Two hundred twenty-one large, reinforced concrete piles¹ were driven more than 100 feet deep into the ground. Onto those pilings, steel straps were anchored and fastened to a unit that can be adjusted if need be to keep the building level. With this unseen but sure foundation, that temple today stands steady and straight.

NARRATOR: As we build our foundation of faith in God, we can trust Him to always be there for us in time of need. President Gordon B. Hinckley in the April 2002 General Conference emphasized that our faith and obedience will bring miracles into our lives just as the scriptures promise. This was illustrated by an account in the words of a Brazilian woman.

(President Gordon B. Hinckley, Sunday Morning Session, April 2002)

Let me give you a story of a woman in São Paulo, Brazil. She worked while going to school to provide for her family. I use her own words in telling this story. She says:

"The university in which I studied had a regulation that prohibited the students that were in debt from taking tests. For this reason, when I received my salary I would first separate the money for tithing and offerings, and the remainder was allotted for the payment of the school and other expenses.

"I remember a time when I . . . faced serious financial difficulties. It was a Thursday when I received my salary. When I figured the monthly budget, I noticed that there wouldn't be enough to pay [both] my tithing and my university. I would have to choose between them. The bimonthly tests would start the following week, and if I didn't take them I could lose the school year. I felt great agony. . . . My heart ached. I had a painful decision before me, and I didn't know what to decide. I pondered between the two choices: to pay tithing or to risk the possibility of not obtaining the necessary credits to be approved in school.

"This feeling consumed my soul and remained with me up to Saturday. It was then that I remembered that when I was baptized I had agreed to live the law of tithing. I had taken upon myself an obligation, not with the missionaries, but with my Heavenly Father. At that moment, the anguish started to disappear, giving place to a pleasant sensation of tranquility and determination. . . .

"That night when I prayed, I asked the Lord to forgive me for my indecision. On Sunday, before the beginning of sacrament meeting, I contacted the bishop, and with great pleasure I paid my tithing and offerings. That was a special day. I felt happy and peaceful within myself and with Heavenly Father.

"The next day I was in my office; I tried to find a way to be able to take the tests that would begin on Wednesday. The more I thought, the further I felt from a solution. At that time I worked in an attorney's office, and my employer was the most strict and austere person I had ever met.

"The working period was ending when my employer approached and gave the last orders of the day. When he had done so, with his briefcase in his hand he bid farewell. . . . Suddenly, he halted, and looking at me he asked, 'How is your college?' I was surprised, and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The only thing I could answer with a trembling voice was, 'Everything is all right!' He looked thoughtfully at me and bid farewell again. . . .

"Suddenly the secretary entered the room, saying that I was a very fortunate person! When I asked her why, she simply answered: 'The employer has just said that from today on the company is going to pay fully for your college and your books. Before you leave, stop at my desk and inform me of the costs so that tomorrow I can give you the check.'

"After she left, crying and feeling very humble, I knelt exactly where I was and thanked the Lord for His generosity. I . . . said to Heavenly Father that He didn't have to bless me

so much. I only needed the cost of one month's installment, and the tithing I had paid on Sunday was very small compared to the amount I was receiving! During that prayer the words recorded in Malachi came to my mind: 'Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Mal. 3:10). Up to that moment I had never felt the magnitude of the promise contained in that scripture and that this commandment was truly a witness of the love that God, our Heavenly Father, gives to His children here on earth."

NARRATOR: The exercise of our faith is seen by, and affects others. Sister Silvia H. Allred told of a simple experience with a grandson in the October 2008 General Conference:

(Sister Silvia H. Allred, Saturday Morning Session, October 2008)

A couple of years ago, my grandson Christian was turning eight and planning his baptismal service with great anticipation. He asked his mother if I could be one of the speakers and share my conversion story. When I asked him why he wanted me to do that, he replied, "Grandma, that is so important. Do you realize that if you hadn't accepted the gospel, I wouldn't be getting baptized? I wouldn't even be who I am."

NARRATOR: Our next story is a dramatic incident from the early history of the Church , related by President James E. Faust during the April 2000 General Conference. It illustrates the exercise of faith by both a loving mother and her young son.

(President James E. Faust, Sunday Morning Session, April 2000)

At Haun's Mill, a heroic pioneer woman, Amanda Smith, learned by faith how to do something beyond her abilities and the scientific knowledge of her time. On that terrible day in 1838, as the firing ceased and the mobsters left, she returned to the mill and saw her eldest son, Willard, carrying his seven-year-old brother, Alma. She cried, "Oh! my Alma is dead!"

"No, mother," he said, "I think Alma is not dead. But father and brother Sardius are [dead]!" But there was no time for tears now. Alma's entire hip bone was shot away. Amanda later recalled:

"Flesh, hip bone, joint and all had been ploughed out. . . . We laid little Alma on a bed in our tent and I examined the wound. It was a ghastly sight. I knew not what to do. . . . Yet was I there, all that long, dreadful night, with my dead and my wounded, and none but God as our physician and help. 'Oh my Heavenly Father,' I cried, 'what shall I do? Thou seest my poor wounded boy and knowest my inexperience. Oh, Heavenly Father, direct me what to do!' And then I was directed as by a voice speaking to me.

". . . Our fire was still smouldering. . . . I was directed to take . . . ashes and make a lye and put a cloth saturated with it right into the wound. . . . Again and again I saturated the cloth and put it into the hole . . . , and each time mashed flesh and splinters of bone came away with the cloth; and the wound became as white as chicken's flesh.

"Having done as directed I again prayed to the Lord and was again instructed as distinctly as though a physician had been standing by speaking to me. Near by was a slippery-elm tree. From this I was told to make a . . . poultice and fill the wound with it. . . . The poultice was made, and the wound, which took fully a quarter of a yard of linen to cover, . . . was properly dressed. . . .

"I removed the wounded boy to a house . . . and dressed his hip; the Lord directing me as before. I was reminded that in my husband's trunk there was a bottle of balsam. This I poured into the wound, greatly soothing Alma's pain.

"Alma my child,' I said, 'you believe that the Lord made your hip?'

"Yes, mother.'

"Well, the Lord can make something there in the place of your hip, don't you believe he can, Alma?'

"Do you think that the Lord can, mother?'" inquired the child, in his simplicity.

"Yes, my son,' I replied, 'he has showed it all to me in a vision.'

"Then I laid him comfortably on his face, and said: 'Now you lay like that, and don't move, and the Lord will make you another hip.'

"So Alma laid on his face for five weeks, until he was entirely recovered--a flexible gristle having grown in place of the missing joint and socket, which remains to this day a marvel to physicians. . . .

"It is now nearly forty years ago, but Alma has never been the least crippled during his life, and he has traveled quite a long period of the time as a missionary of the gospel and [is] a living miracle of the power of God."

NARRATOR:

When we combine our faith in God with faith in our own abilities, the result can be astounding, even miraculous. Those who continue diligently in faith especially during times of trial see the miracles. When those miracles come, the challenges faced on the way may seem insignificant in comparison. In the October 2001 General Conference, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin provided an example of someone whose faith took him step by step to overcome what seemed to be an impossible task.

(Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, Saturday Morning Session, October 2001)

Recently, I read about Erik Weihenmayer, a 33-year-old man who dreamed of climbing Mount Everest, a feat that defies many of the world's most expert climbers. In fact, nearly 90 percent of those who attempt the climb never reach the summit. Temperatures sink lower than 30 degrees below zero. Besides extreme cold, 100-mile-per-hour winds, deadly crevasses, and avalanches, the climber must overcome the challenges of high altitude, lack of oxygen, and perhaps unsanitary food and water. Since 1953, at least 165 climbers have died in the attempt to scale the 29,000-foot-high summit.

In spite of the risks, hundreds line up each year to make the ascent, Erik among them. But there is an important difference between Erik and every other climber who had attempted to ascend before: Erik is totally blind.

When Erik was 13 years of age, he lost his sight as a result of a hereditary disease of the retina. Although he could no longer do many of the things he wanted to, he was determined not to waste his life feeling depressed and useless. He then began to stretch his limits.

At age 16 he discovered rock climbing. By feeling the face of the rock, he found handholds and footholds that allowed him to climb. Sixteen years later, he began his ascent up Mount Everest. The story of his climb, as you might imagine, was filled with many harrowing and life-threatening challenges. But Erik eventually scaled the south summit and took his place with those who had gone before him, one of the few to stand on top of the highest mountain on the face of the earth.

When asked how he did it, Erik said, "I just kept thinking . . . keep your mind focused. Don't let all that doubt and fear and frustration sort of get in the way." Then, most importantly, he said, "Just take each day step by step."

Yes, Erik conquered Everest by simply putting one foot in front of the other. And he continued to do this until he reached the top.

Like Erik, we may have obstacles that would hold us back. We may even make excuses why we can't do what we want to do. Perhaps when we are tempted to justify our own lack of achievement, we can remember Erik, who, in spite of having lost his sight, accomplished what many thought was impossible simply by continuing to put one foot in front of the other.

NARRATOR:

We will all face many challenges in our lives that may seem impossible and overwhelming, but the Lord has promised assistance to those who exercise faith. May we all develop more faith – a fundamental principle of the gospel.

This has been “Stories from General Conference”, collection number two, on the topic of faith. Thank you for listening to the Mormon Channel.