

Episode 34

Stories from General Conference

TRIALS

NARRATOR: One thing certain in this life is that at times we all encounter circumstances we consider a trial. These circumstances are varied, and it seems some people have more trials than others, and we wonder why.

Welcome to this episode of “Stories from General Conference.” The topic is “trials”. In the next few minutes, we will gain some insight into the nature and purpose of trials through accounts given by general authorities during general conferences of the Church.

To begin, in the April 1998 General Conference, President Monson shared a personal experience linked with an analogy on facing trials:

(President Thomas S. Monson, Sunday Morning Session, April 1998)

I commence my message this morning with a question: Have you ever taken a vacation with your entire family? If not, you are in for some surprises when you do. My wife and I a few years ago joined our children, their companions, and the grandchildren at Disneyland in southern California. Beyond the entrance to the famous theme park, the group rushed to what was then the newest feature--Star Tours. You enter a simulated rocket, take your seat, and fasten your seat belt. All of a sudden the entire vehicle begins to vibrate violently. I think the mechanical voice which comes over the loudspeaker calls it "heavy turbulence." (I have never returned to this featured ride. I get all the real turbulence I can handle just flying from place to place fulfilling my responsibilities.)

After recuperating for a few minutes, we journeyed to the feature with the longest line. It is called Splash Mountain. The crowd filed round and round in a serpentine pattern. The music, which was piped through the loudspeakers to the waiting throng, contained the words of the song:

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, zip-a-dee-ay,
My, oh my, what a wonderful day!
Plenty of sunshine, headin' my way,
Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, zip-a-dee-ay!

By now we were ready to board the boat which would carry us in a vertical dive that evoked screams from the passengers in the boat ahead as it roared down the waterfall and

glided to a stop in the water below. Just before taking the plunge, however, I noticed on one wall a small sign declaring a profound truth: "You can't run away from trouble; there's no place that far!"

These few words have remained with me. They pertain not only to the theme of Splash Mountain but also to our sojourn in mortality.

Life is a school of experience, a time of probation. We learn as we bear our afflictions and live through our heartaches.

NARRATOR: Our experiences in this life will be as great as we make them. The attitude we choose can help make our trials easier to endure. In the April 1994 General Conference, President Monson spoke of two men whose way of facing their trials brought light into many peoples' lives.

(President Thomas S. Monson, Priesthood Session, April 2004)

From my personal chronology of courage, let me share with you an example from military service.

Entering the United States Navy in the closing months of World War II was a challenging experience for me. I learned of brave deeds, acts of valor, and examples of courage. One best remembered was the quiet courage of an 18-year-old seaman—not of our faith—who was not too proud to pray. Of 250 men in the company, he was the only one who each night knelt down by the side of his bunk, at times amidst the jeers of the curious, the jests of unbelievers, and, with bowed head, prayed to God. He never wavered. He never faltered. He had courage.

I love these words from the poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

*It is easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows by like a song,
But the man worth while is one who will smile,
When everything goes dead wrong.*

Such a man was Paul Tingey. Just a month ago I attended his funeral services here in Salt Lake City. Paul grew up in a fine Latter-day Saint home and served an honorable mission for the Lord in Germany. A companion of his in the mission field was Elder Bruce D. Porter of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Elder Porter described Elder Tingey as one of the most dedicated and successful missionaries he ever knew.

At the conclusion of his mission, Elder Tingey returned home, completed his studies at the university, married his sweetheart, and together with her reared their family. He served as a bishop and was successful in his vocation.

Then, without much warning, the symptoms of a dreaded disease struck his nervous system—even multiple sclerosis. Held captive by this malady, Paul Tingey struggled valiantly but then was confined to a care facility for the remainder of his life. There he cheered up the sad and made everyone feel glad. Whenever I attended Church meetings there, Paul lifted my spirits, as he did all others.

When the World Olympics came to Salt Lake City in 2002, Paul was selected to carry the Olympic torch for a specified distance. When this was announced at the care facility, a cheer erupted from those patients assembled, and a hearty round of applause echoed through the halls. As I congratulated Paul, he said with his limited diction, "I hope I don't drop the torch!"

Brethren, Paul Tingey didn't drop the Olympic torch. What's more, he carried bravely the torch he was handed in life and did so to the day of his passing.

Spirituality, faith, determination, courage—Paul Tingey had them all.

NARRATOR: **Paul's Tingey's example through the life he lived, speaks volumes to us about how we can allow our trials to make us better. In the April 2007 General Conference, Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society General President, shared the following account about a family who focused on gratitude even though they were going through a very difficult time:"**

(Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, Saturday Morning Session, April 2007)

Let me share a sweet story with you. A family was going through a difficult time. It was hard for them not to focus on their challenges. The mother wrote: "Our world had completely crumpled, so we turned to Heavenly Father for guidance. Almost immediately we realized that we were surrounded by goodness and were being cheered on from every side. We began as a family to express our gratitude to each other as well as to the Lord daily. A close friend pointed out to me that our family's 'blessing basket' was overflowing. From that conversation came a sort of game, which my children and I grew to love. Before family prayer each night we would talk about how our day had gone and then share with each other all of the many blessings that had been added to our 'blessing basket.' The more we expressed gratitude, the more there was to be grateful for. We felt the love of the Lord in a significant way as opportunities for growth presented themselves."

What would a "blessing basket" add to your family?

NARRATOR: **A Latter-day Saint hymn repeats the same message learned through the “blessing basket” described in the previous story. “Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”**

In the October 2004 General Conference, President James E. Faust shared a story about a man who saw his major trial as a great blessing.

(President James E. Faust, Priesthood Session, October 2004)

The patriarchal order runs from Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob. Through the line of the priesthood it continues in our own day and time. Through the ages, blessings and promises were given from the fathers to their faithful sons. A modern example of this is taken from the life of Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy. He recalls:

"When it was time for me to go on a mission, I was very excited to serve the Lord. Just before I was to leave, however, I found out that I had bone cancer. The chance of living long enough to serve a mission wasn't very high. I had faith that the Lord would provide a way if He wanted me to go. My father gave me a blessing in which I was told that I would serve my mission in Mexico, serve in the Church all my life, and have a family. My right arm had to be amputated above the elbow, but my life was spared, and the promises I was given have all been fulfilled.

"Some would think that losing an arm would be a terrible burden, but it has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. I learned that it is very important to have challenges and to face up to them."

Elder Dickson had always been right-handed, and now he had to learn to do everything left-handed. One struggle was learning how to tie his ties. He said: "One Sunday morning when I was in my bedroom with my tie in my hand, I thought, *How am I going to tie this?* I thought about getting a clip-on tie. I thought about asking Mom to help me. But I couldn't take her with me on my mission just to tie my ties. So I decided I had to learn how to do it myself. I finally figured it out by using my teeth. I still do it that way, even after having tied it thousands of times."

NARRATOR: As evidenced by the life of Elder Dickson, persistence can help us overcome many of our trials.

In the April 2006 General Conference President Dieter F. Uchtdorf shared a personal story from his boyhood that illustrates how overcoming discouragement during trials may turn out to be a great blessing in the future:

(Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Priesthood Session, April 2006)

Allow me to share with you an experience from my own boyhood. When I was 11 years old, my family had to leave East Germany and begin a new life in West Germany overnight. Until my father could get back into his original profession as a government employee, my parents operated a small laundry business in our little town. I became the laundry delivery boy. To be able to do that effectively, I needed a bicycle to pull the

heavy laundry cart. I had always dreamed of owning a nice, sleek, shiny, sporty red bicycle. But there had never been enough money to fulfill this dream. What I got instead was a heavy, ugly, black, sturdy workhorse of a bicycle. I delivered laundry on that bike before and after school for quite a few years. Most of the time, I was not overly excited about the bike, the cart, or my job. Sometimes the cart seemed so heavy and the work so tiring that I thought my lungs would burst, and I often had to stop to catch my breath. Nevertheless, I did my part because I knew we desperately needed the income as a family, and it was my way to contribute.

If I had only known back then what I learned many years later—if I had only been able to *see the end from the beginning*—I would have had a better appreciation of these experiences, and it would have made my job so much easier.

Many years later, when I was about to be drafted into the military, I decided to volunteer instead and join the Air Force to become a pilot. I loved flying and thought being a pilot would be my thing.

To be accepted for the program I had to pass a number of tests, including a strict physical exam. The doctors were slightly concerned by the results and did some additional medical tests. Then they announced, "You have scars on your lung which are an indication of a lung disease in your early teenage years, but obviously you are fine now." The doctors wondered what kind of treatment I had gone through to heal the disease. Until the day of that examination I had never known that I had any kind of lung disease. Then it became clear to me that my regular exercise in fresh air as a laundry boy had been a key factor in my healing from this illness. Without the extra effort of pedaling that heavy bicycle day in and day out, pulling the laundry cart up and down the streets of our town, I might never have become a jet fighter pilot and later a 747 airline captain.

We don't always know the details of our future. We do not know what lies ahead. We live in a time of uncertainty. We are surrounded by challenges on all sides. Occasionally discouragement may sneak into our day; frustration may invite itself into our thinking; doubt might enter about the value of our work. In these dark moments Satan whispers in our ears that we will never be able to succeed, that the price isn't worth the effort, and that our small part will never make a difference. He, the father of all lies, will try to prevent us from seeing the end from the beginning.

NARRATOR:

You're listening to the Mormon Channel. This is "Stories from General Conference on the topic of trials.

Through all our trials, whatever they may be, we need to remember there is no trial that the atonement of the Savior cannot ultimately heal. In the October 2008 General Conference, Elder Quentin L. Cook shared a dramatic story which provides an example of how this principle was implemented.

(Elder Quentin L. Cook, October 2008, Sunday Afternoon Session)

Let me share with you the true account of one sister, Ellen Yates from Grantsville, Utah. Early in October, 10 years ago, she kissed her husband, Leon, good-bye as he left to go to work in Salt Lake City. This would be the last time she would see Leon alive. He had a collision with a young man 20 years of age who was late for his first job and had tried to pass a slower vehicle, resulting in a head-on collision that killed them both instantly. Sister Yates said that after two compassionate highway patrolmen told her the news, she plunged into shock and grief.

She records, “As I tried to look ahead in life, all I could see was darkness and pain.” It turned out that her husband’s best friend was the bishop of the young man’s ward. The bishop called Sister Yates and told her that the young man’s mother, Jolayne Willmore, wanted to talk with her. She remembers “being shocked because I was so centered on my grief and pain that I had not even thought about the young man and his family. I suddenly realized that here was a mother who was in as much or more pain than I was. I quickly gave my permission . . . for a visit.”

When Brother and Sister Willmore arrived, they expressed their great sorrow that their son was responsible for Leon’s death and presented her with a picture of the Savior holding a little girl in His arms. Sister Yates says, “When times become too hard to bear, I look at this picture and remember that Christ knows me personally. He knows my loneliness and my trials.” One scripture that comforts Sister Yates is “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”

Each October Sister Yates and Sister Willmore (both of whom are here together in the Conference Center today) go to the temple together and offer thanks for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, for the plan of salvation, for eternal families, and for the covenants that bind together husbands and wives and families on both sides of the veil. Sister Yates concludes, “Through this trial, I have felt the love of my Father in Heaven and my Savior in greater abundance than I had ever felt before.” She testifies that “there is no grief, no pain, no sickness so great that the Atonement of Christ and the love of Christ cannot heal.” What a wonderful example of love and forgiveness these two sisters have demonstrated. It has allowed the Atonement of Jesus Christ to be efficacious in their lives.

NARRATOR:

The example we provide in dealing with trials can make a great difference in the lives of those around us. In the October 2007 General Conference Elder Octaviano Tenorio related an experience from his own life that illustrates how he faced a trial with an eternal perspective, helping not only himself, but others who noticed his example:

(Elder Octaviano Tenorio, Sunday Afternoon Session, October 2007)

Many times we don't comprehend the meaning of the ordinances of the temple in their fulness until after we have known affliction or passed through experiences that could have been extremely sad without the knowledge of the plan of salvation.

When my wife and I had only been married a year and a half, she was ready to deliver our first baby. We had decided that she would have the baby in the Chihuahua colonies, where she had been born. At that time I was working in Mexico City, and we decided that she would be there a month ahead of the delivery date. I was planning to join her later.

The delivery date arrived. I was at work when I received a call from my father-in-law. The news was good: "Octaviano, your wife has given birth, and you now have a little daughter who is beautiful." So, in my happiness, I began to announce this to my friends and partners at work, who in turn asked me for chocolates to celebrate the birth of my little one.

The next day I began to give out chocolates throughout the four floors of our office building. When I reached the second floor, I received another call from my father-in-law. This time the news was different: "Octaviano, your wife is fine, but your daughter has passed away. The funeral will be today, and you don't have time to come. What are you going to do?" I asked to speak with Rosa, my wife, and then asked her if she was OK. She replied that she was fine, depending on how I was feeling. Then we talked about the plan of salvation, remembering this scripture:

"And I also beheld that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" (D&C 137:10).

I asked her, "Do you believe that?" And she said, "Yes, I do." Then I replied, "We should be happy then. I love you. And if you are OK with that, I'll take my vacation in two weeks, spend some time with you, and return back together to Mexico."

We knew that one day we would be reunited with our daughter because we were sealed by the power of the priesthood in the temple. We ended the telephone call, and I resumed giving out the chocolates in my office building.

Seeing me do this, one of my co-workers was surprised and asked me how I could do this after such terrible news. I answered, "If you have three hours, I can explain to you why I am not feeling too sad and about my knowledge of what happens after death." He didn't have three hours at that moment but did later. We ended up talking for four hours. He accepted the gospel and, together with his mother and brother, was baptized into the Church after receiving the discussions.

I know that thanks to the power of godliness manifested in the ordinances of the temple, I will now be able to know my daughter. I will embrace her, and we will be with her for eternity, just as we are now with our three surviving children.

NARRATOR:

Some trials will test our faith in ways that may seem unbearable, but the gospel can be a great source of comfort. In this concluding account, given during the April 2009 General Conference, Elder Rafael E. Pino shared the tragic circumstances of two families whose faith in the gospel helped them endure nearly overwhelming trials.

(Elder Rafael E. Pino, Saturday Afternoon Session, April 2009)

One morning some years ago, I received a telephone call from Brother Omar Alvarez, who at the time served as one of my counselors in the bishopric. His three-year-old daughter had died in a tragic accident.

He related the account of what happened that day as follows:

“As soon as we arrived at one of the beautiful Venezuelan beaches, our children begged us to let them go out and play in a small river near the beach. We allowed them to go. Then we started to get some things out of the car. Two minutes later we noticed that our children were starting to get too far from the shore.

“As we went toward them to bring them closer, we noticed that our three-year-old daughter was not with the other children. We looked for her desperately, only to find her floating near the place where the other children were. We quickly pulled her out of the water. Some people came to try to help save her, but nothing could be done. Our youngest daughter had drowned.

“The moments that followed were extremely difficult, filled with anguish and pain for the loss of our youngest daughter. That feeling soon turned into an almost unbearable torment. However, in the midst of the confusion and uncertainty, the thought that our children had been born under the covenant came to our minds, and through that covenant, our daughter belongs to us for eternity.

“What a blessing it is to belong to The Church of Jesus Christ and to have received the ordinances of His holy temple! We now feel that we are much more committed to be faithful to the Lord and endure to the end because we want to be worthy of the blessings that the temple provides in order to see our daughter again. At times we mourn, but ‘we do not mourn as those without hope’” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2007], 177).

This faithful family came to understand that when adversity arrives in our lives, the only true source of comfort is God.

Several years after the difficult trial the Alvarez family faced, I witnessed how another faithful family dealt with great adversity. Several members of the Quero family had died in a terrible car accident. Brother Abraham Quero lost his parents, two sisters, his brother-in-law, and his niece in that accident.

Brother Quero showed an admirable attitude when he said the following:

“This was the time to show loyalty to God and to acknowledge that we depend on Him, that His will must be obeyed, and that we are subject to Him.

“I spoke to my brothers and gave them strength and courage to understand what President Kimball taught many years ago, that ‘there is no tragedy in death, but only in sin’ (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2006], 18) and that the important thing is not how a man died but how he lived.

“The words of Job filled my soul: ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord’ (Job 1:21). And then from Jesus: ‘I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live’ (John 11:25).

“This was one of the most spiritual experiences we had as a family—to accept the will of God under such very difficult circumstances.”

In both of the experiences that these good families endured, pain and sorrow left because of the light of the gospel, which filled them with peace and comfort, providing the assurance that everything would be well.

NARRATOR:

Few would wish trials upon themselves. But however hard to understand, the trials we face in this life will be ultimately for our good. The gospel of Jesus Christ can provide an eternal perspective that builds the faith needed to endure. Trials can prepare us for the future and help us be more capable of performing the Lord’s work as we relate to others who face similar paths.

This episode of “Stories from General Conference” has been on the topic of trials. This is the Mormon Channel. To learn more, go to radio.lds.org.