

START Moving

By Elder Von G. Keetch

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A story is told of a group of smoke jumpers. These brave men and women fight forest fires by parachuting onto the ground above a fire and fighting it from the top down, while others fight it from below.

During one particularly large forest fire, an elite team of smoke jumpers assembled for a briefing before taking off in their airplane. The dispatcher—a wise and experienced firefighter—told the smoke jumpers that things were very volatile and that he could not give them precise instructions. Rather, the dispatcher instructed, the smoke jumpers should contact him by radio once they had parachuted onto the ridge above the fire. Then he would give them instructions as to the course they should take to begin to fight.

Quickly the smoke jumpers took off in their plane, parachuted onto the ridge above the raging fire, and assembled themselves for action. As they viewed the fire from above, they could see half a dozen possible paths they could take to begin their work.

In keeping with their agreement with the dispatcher, the leader of the team took out a handheld radio, found

Relaxing on the ridge may seem a safe way to avoid making mistakes, but it's also a way to avoid making progress.

the proper frequency, and called the dispatcher to request instructions as to which path to take. But only static came back from the radio; they could not hear the dispatcher at all.

Presuming that the dispatcher was busy with other tasks, the smoke jumpers decided to wait 10 minutes and try again. But when they tried the dispatcher the second time, they received the same result—dead air and static and no instructions.

The smoke jumpers conferred with each other. They could still see several paths down the mountain that would put them in a good position to fight the fire. But they were concerned that they didn't have any direction from the dispatcher. They worried that if they started moving down the path that looked best to them, they might actually be moving counter to the course the dispatcher wanted them to take and they would be forced to retrace their steps.

So they decided to wait on top of the ridge. Fifteen minutes later they tried the dispatcher again. Nothing. They took off their backpacks and found a place to sit down. Thirty minutes became an hour; an hour became two hours. They regularly tried to contact the dispatcher. But as before, they received only static in return.

The smoke jumpers decided to eat lunch. After that, when they still couldn't contact the dispatcher, they reclined on their backpacks and took a nap. They were frustrated. If the dispatcher would just pay some attention to them and tell them which way to go, they would happily follow that course and begin their firefighting efforts. But the dispatcher seemed to be ignoring them, probably preoccupied with others. And they had decided that they weren't going to move without the dispatcher's directions. After all, those directions had been promised to them before they parachuted onto the ridge.



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Seven hours after the smoke jumpers arrived at the top of the ridge, a weary crew chief from the group fighting the fire farther down the mountain came up the trail and found the smoke jumpers. He was flabbergasted. Approaching their leader, he asked, “What are you doing lounging around on the ridge? We really needed your help. The fire almost got away from us because we didn’t have help to contain it. And all this time you’ve just been relaxing up here on the ridge?”

The lead smoke jumper explained their predicament to the crew chief. They had been promised instructions from the dispatcher. They had been vigilant in trying to obtain those instructions. But the dispatcher had ignored them, never responding to their calls. True, they could see several paths down to the fire. But they were afraid they would take the wrong one. So they decided to wait until they had the promised instructions from the dispatcher.

The crew chief held out his hand and took the small radio the smoke jumpers had been using. He then walked about 50 yards (45 m) down one of the paths that led toward the fire. He stopped and tried the radio. The dispatcher’s voice came through loud and clear. The crew chief then walked back to the top of the ridge and traveled about 50 yards farther down another path. He stopped and called the dispatcher. Again the dispatcher’s voice came back immediately.

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The crew chief hiked back to the smoke jumpers and tossed the radio to the leader, saying, “You are in a dead spot. All you had to do was start moving down one of the trails, and the dispatcher could have easily given you course corrections and brought you right into the spot where we needed you. Instead you lounged up here, and you were totally worthless to us.”

Often in our need for spiritual guidance and direction, we can be tempted to do exactly what the smoke jumpers did. We find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. We see several paths available to us, and we’re not sure which one to take. We have been promised inspiration and help from our Heavenly Father. But it doesn’t always come immediately. We grow frustrated and decide we are simply going to sit down and wait until the

promised guidance comes. We wait and we wait and we wait, wondering why the divine Dispatcher doesn’t help us with our course.

In so doing, we ignore an important principle of revelation. Our Father in Heaven expects us to use our own intelligence, ability, and experience to chart our initial course. As we press forward along the path we have chosen, we are in a much better position to receive the course corrections He may have for us. But if we simply plop down on the ridge and recline on our backpacks until He gives us instruction, we risk finding ourselves in a spiritual dead spot.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has taught us:

“We are expected to use the light and knowledge we already possess

to work out our lives. We should not need a revelation to instruct us to be up and about our duty, for we have been told to do that already in the scriptures; nor should we expect revelation to replace the spiritual or temporal intelligence which we have already received—only to extend it. We must go about our life in an ordinary, workaday way, following the routines and rules and regulations that govern life.

“Rules and regulations and commandments are valuable protection. If we need revealed instruction to alter our course, it will be waiting along the way as we arrive at the point of need.”¹

I testify that the best and clearest direction comes in our lives not when we are just waiting for our Heavenly Father to send help and guidance but when we are anxiously engaged with our back bent to the task. To those of you who are waiting upon the Lord for guidance in your lives—who need help with a major decision or question—I give you this challenge: Prayerfully and carefully use your own intelligence and your own resources to choose a path that seems right to you. Then become anxiously engaged in walking that path (see D&C 58:26–28). When the time for course correction comes, He will be there to help you and to guide you. ■

NOTE

1. Boyd K. Packer, “The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2007, 16; *New Era*, Jan. 2007, 4.

BY SMALL MEANS

By Laurel Teuscher

I thought I was doing fine. I had served a mission, graduated from college, secured a full-time job, and finally moved into an apartment by myself. I attended church every Sunday and sometimes went to activities. I had plenty of friends, single and married, and I suddenly had more time for reading, my favorite thing to do as a child. Yet even with all of these activities, I still felt lost.

In Alma chapter 37, we read of Alma’s advice to his son Helaman. In verses 41–42, Alma talks about Lehi’s family and the Liahona. He explains that the Liahona would not work when “they were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence” and that “they did not progress in their journey; therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course.” Reading these verses helped me realize that I was not progressing. I was not exercising my faith or being diligent in anything in my life. I had stopped working toward a goal. I was simply waiting for something to happen.

There wasn’t one specific moment when I made a list and wrote down everything I needed to change.

Rather, those changes came little by little. First, I started to get up early and go for a run or do some other form of exercise. Next, I began to look into school programs that might help me progress in my job or allow me to get a different one. I found a program and then spent time preparing to take the necessary tests to apply. Scripture study and prayer became more important to me, and I tried to spend time every day feasting on the words of Christ and seeking to feel the Spirit. I made a special effort to be more involved in my ward—even if it meant sacrificing some personal time.

Since I started making these small changes, I have felt happier. I feel that I’m progressing and Heavenly Father is giving me new challenges. I can face those challenges with hope rather than fear or discouragement. I’ve learned that when we cease to work or exercise our faith and move in a direction, Heavenly Father cannot help us progress and we will not reach our destination. I am so grateful for the small changes in my life that have helped me to see a way ahead. ■