

“You Gotta Believe”

I was stuck in the rut of believing that God would work His mighty miracles for everyone but me.

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Every computer I have owned for the past 29 years has had the same screen saver. It is a scrawling custom message that reads, “You gotta believe.” This helps me recall something I hope to always remember. While there are many more details to this experience, I will offer an abridged version.

At the beginning of my senior year at Brigham Young University, I began worrying whether I was making the right decision about my future. I was taking entrance exams for graduate programs and even submitting applications, but nothing felt right. To find some guidance, I interviewed doctors, lawyers, businesspeople, teachers, and pretty much everyone who had a pulse. Nothing clicked. My wife, Lisa, and I started fasting and praying for direction. Nothing happened. We kept on praying and fasting.

One day in the fall, Lisa asked me if there was *anyone* who could possibly help me with whom I hadn’t yet already talked.

Without a moment’s hesitation, I said, “Yes. If I could only talk to the president of BYU, Jeffrey R. Holland, that would clear everything up.”

So Lisa, who possesses more passion, compassion, and faith than Joan of Arc, Mother Teresa, and Esther of the Old Testament—combined—said, “Then you should go and talk with him!”

“Are you crazy?” I thought. What would I say? “Um,

excuse me, President. I am one of the 30,000-plus students at BYU. Will you please tell me what I should major in?” Oh please!

Instead I muddled my way through the next seven or so months trying to figure it out. But I couldn’t seem to get my bearings. I felt as if I were in a fog. It felt as if *everyone* else was receiving revelation, direction, and confidence.

The irony was that while I knew that God would answer the prayers of any who asked with sincere intent, I still wavered in knowing that He would answer my prayers. And when it seemed like it mattered the very most, I felt a little alone—abandoned and even hopeless at times. I reached a point in which I didn’t care so much about what I did for a living as much as I cared about receiving divine direction. It was clear that I wasn’t standing up very straight, my hands were hanging down, and my feeble knees needed strengthening (see D&C 81:5).

Just several weeks prior to graduation, I attended my senior capstone classes in the basement of the Jesse Knight Building. As I prepared to leave the building, I noticed a crowd gathered at the west doors. I worked my way to the front of the doors and discovered that the reason no one was leaving was because it was raining—a complete down-pour. Having taught at the missionary training center earlier that day, I was dressed in a suit. I can almost hear myself saying, “Typical, just typical,” as I looked outside at the rainstorm and sized up the situation.

I put a *Daily Universe* newspaper over my head and started running through the parking lot. The newspaper turned to a pulpy mush, and I was soaked almost immediately. So I walked—slowly.

“I might as well catch pneumonia and be sent to the hospital,” I thought. I was in a blue mood.

As I walked past the Brimhall Building, I heard someone yell out, “You need this more than I do!”

I looked across the street, and there was President Holland holding up an umbrella. I offered an exchange of my backpack for his umbrella. He responded by opening the rear passenger door and offering me a ride home. I ran across the street, got in, and immediately created a little puddle of water on the backseat. Sister Holland, who was already in the car, greeted me as President Holland got into the driver’s seat.

“Where can I take you?” President Holland asked as he looked at me through the rearview mirror.

My wife and I were managing apartments south of campus, and I hesitated telling him where I lived because I didn’t think he would be very impressed. But with the president of the university looking me in the eye, albeit through the rearview mirror, I confessed the name of the complex.

President and Sister Holland chuckled, and President Holland said, “Pat and I managed those apartments when we were undergraduates at BYU.”

I was stunned and speechless. My tiny brain couldn’t comprehend that President Jeffrey R. Holland had actually lived in the same apartments that I was living in. Impossible! You see, I had long admired President Holland and had placed him and Sister Holland in the “Born with a Life” category. I imagined that his life was charmed. He had been a perfect high school athlete, had been a perfect missionary, and had a perfect wife—just perfect. So to think that I actually lived in the same apartments was incomprehensible.

“Are you married?” they asked.

“Yes,” I answered, my head still spinning.

“Do you have children?”

“We have a son,” I said.

“Our first son was born while we were in those apartments,” they explained.

“Really?” I managed to blurt out.

We drove south on Campus Drive past the Maeser Building. As I sat in the car, I suddenly realized that seven months previous I had told my wife that if I could only talk with President Holland, then I was confident I would receive helpful direction. I mustered my courage and asked, “Did you ever worry about your future?”

“Oh yes,” he replied.

I was stunned, and all I could say was, “Really?” After all, I thought this was a man who had never had a worry in his entire life.

I asked several other questions and found my response to be “Really?” every time.

I finally asked, “President Holland, have you ever been so discouraged that you didn’t know if things would ever work out? Did you ever worry that you might not make it after all?”

He looked at me through the rearview mirror and answered, once again to my surprise, “Yes, I did.”

True to the pattern of our conversation, I managed an incredulous “Really?”

I recall Sister Holland saying, “Yes, Matt. Really.”

We drove to my complex (without any directions given, I might add), and I moved toward the door to get out. But President Holland put the car in park, and he and Sister Holland turned in their seats to face me. We talked.

At one point he said, “Matt, part of your problem is that you don’t believe.”

I admit I felt a little bad, as if my testimony was considered subpar.

“Oh, I’m not talking about your testimony,” President Holland said. “You just believe that God will work His mighty miracles for everyone but you.”

His assessment was right.



And then he said with his typical fervor, “You gotta believe, Matt. You gotta believe.”

He offered me sound counsel and heaps of encouragement, and then I got out of the car. I stood and waved until they were out of sight.

Upon entering our apartment, I shared my experience with my wife. We wept together and then wrote the experience down—so that we would always remember.

So why the screen saver? While I will always be grateful for President and Sister Holland, I want to make sure that I never forget that God is aware of each of us. I want to remember every day that no matter what happens, you gotta believe.

Twelve years after my ride home in the rainstorm, Elder Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, in a general conference address, reflected on a personal experience when he was discouraged and unsure about his own future. He offered himself this advice, which brought back memories and renewed my own resolve. Elder

Holland said: “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.”¹

I testify that if you seek help and invite others into your life, then your life will be fuller, your success will be more meaningful, and you will find peace. I testify that God will answer your prayers. It may take months, years, or however long is required for you to openly receive His answers, but the vision will surely come. You gotta believe!

I especially hope that you will stand up straight, smile, and remember who you are. You are a child of God. Be a light. Don’t you ever forget it. ■

From a devotional address, “Brigham Young University: A Visionary House,” given at Brigham Young University on October 25, 2016. For the full address, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTE

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38.