

Ancient Examples, Modern Promises

Dating has never come easily to me, but I draw strength from scriptural examples of faithfulness.

Name withheld

Although I find most social situations enjoyable, I've struggled in the dating scene. I never dated before my mission, and when I returned home after two years, I felt particularly inexperienced.

In the decade since then, I've tried seemingly "all [I] can do" (2 Nephi 25:23) to marry—something I've been promised in my patriarchal blessing—but have had no success. Sometimes I have felt tempted to despair that I might ever find someone, and in particularly dark moments, I have cried out in prayer: "Please help me. I don't know what I'm doing."

Recently, I have found substantial comfort in examples from the scriptures. The following three stories have been especially powerful in helping me trust in Heavenly Father and His plan.

Joseph of Egypt: Maintain Faith and Hope in God

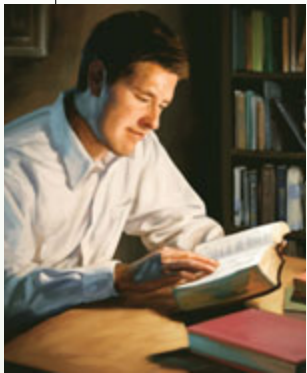
Joseph was forcefully taken from home at 17 and thrust into a foreign land where few shared his religious beliefs. Despite this severe trial, he kept a good attitude and remained faithful

to his masters and to God (see Genesis 37; 39–41). Even so, for 13 years he experienced one undesirable situation after another. His hard work appeared to do little but land him in prison, where he remained until age 30.

I sometimes wonder if Joseph ever thought that God had somehow forgotten him or if Joseph questioned how long he would be in prison or whether he would ever be released. I wonder if the dreams Joseph had dreamed earlier in his life (see Genesis 37:5–11) gave him hope for a brighter future.

Of course, God *did* remember Joseph, as He had Joseph's mother, Rachel (see Genesis 30:22). Joseph was blessed to prosper even in unpleasant situations. Instead of choosing to rebel, pout, or curse God, Joseph exercised remarkable faith. As a result, he was tremendously blessed.

We may be tempted to bemoan our own afflictions, possibly blinding ourselves from the blessings God has already granted us. But maintaining faith and hope can bring about great blessings, as they did for Joseph. And even when our faith isn't rewarded how we





would like, maintaining that faith can still help us live happier lives.

Joseph's experience is also a testament of the superiority of the power and wisdom of God. For years Joseph's efforts seemed to get him nowhere, but through the hand of God, Joseph was released from prison and exalted just below Pharaoh (see Genesis 41:41–43). Could Joseph have foreseen or anticipated such tremendous opportunities?

Sometimes we try hard to achieve something, but our own efforts, however great, are insufficient for the task. I know Heavenly Father can bless us for our faith and obedience with even greater blessings than we hoped for initially. I trust that if I have a good attitude and make the most of difficult

Maintaining faith and hope can bring about great blessings, as they did for Joseph. And even when our faith isn't rewarded how we would like, maintaining that faith can still help us live happier lives.

situations, as Joseph did, in time—the Lord's time—He will “[make] bare his holy arm” (Isaiah 52:10). My toil will not have been in vain. He *will* remember us; in fact, He is constantly aware of and has good things in store for each of us if we remain faithful.

Abraham: Love God above All Else

Some time ago a dating relationship with someone I cared a great deal about ended. Already anxious about being unmarried, I doubted whether I could find another person with whom I was as compatible.

Not long after, I was reminded of the story of Abraham being commanded to sacrifice Isaac (see Genesis 22:1–14). I realized that both of us were asked to give up someone we loved. Of course, my experience pales in comparison to Abraham's, but I discovered that his experience taught patterns I could follow.

Abraham waited a long time for a son to be born to him and Sarah. Isaac's birth was a miracle, and Abraham was told, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Hebrews 11:18). Yet the Lord commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. How would Abraham's seed “be called” in Isaac if Isaac was sacrificed?

Knowing that—but not necessarily *how*—God would keep His promises, Abraham was obedient. His love for his son was great, but his response showed that he loved the Lord above all else. We are asked to demonstrate the same thing (see D&C 101:4–5), and we too have the promise of great reward upon our faithful endurance (see Matthew 24:13). When my relationship ended,



it was difficult to move on. Having received the promise that I will marry, moving on seemed to be unaligned with the fulfillment of that promise. But the promise gave me hope, which helped me to try again and to show Heavenly Father that I love Him above all else.

Abraham's faithfulness was rewarded not only with the life of his son but also with innumerable posterity and other blessings (see Genesis 22:15–18). We too will be rewarded for making the sacrifices God asks of us and for demonstrating our love for Him. That is the essence of the trial of our faith.

Zacharias: Believe That God's Promises Are Real

Sometimes we don't know how the promises the Lord gives us could ever be fulfilled—

Knowing that God would keep His promises, Abraham was obedient. His love for his son was great, but his response showed that he loved the Lord above all else.

like the promise that if we desire it and remain faithful, we'll be blessed with an eternal marriage. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught about this paradox, "There may be times when we must make a courageous decision to hope even when everything around us contradicts [our] hope."¹

Zacharias and his wife, Elisabeth, prayed faithfully and waited for a child all their lives. Finally, Zacharias was promised by an angel that his elderly wife would conceive and bear a child who would prepare the way for the Savior. So great was the blessing that it was incomprehensible to Zacharias. Though an angel had declared it, Zacharias asked, "Whereby shall I know this?" (Luke 1:18).

As with Zacharias, we may become so used to feeling disappointed in our desires—or the promised blessings seem so unbelievable—we forget that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Zacharias's experience has reminded me that Heavenly Father's greatest promises are real and that He always keeps them.

The stories of Joseph, Abraham, and Zacharias are not the only ones that have bolstered my faith and given me hope. There are scores of scriptural accounts of people whose faith has reminded me to have faith regarding what the Lord has promised *me*. I can hardly read a chapter of scripture nowadays without being reminded that the Lord always keeps His promises. This understanding gives me great hope for the future. ■

NOTE

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Infinite Power of Hope," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 23.