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# ALWAYS IN THE Middle

**B**y many world calendars, July marks the middle of the year. While the beginnings and endings of things are celebrated and remembered, the middle of things often goes unnoticed.

Beginnings are times for making resolutions, for creating plans, for bursts of energy. Endings are times for winding down and may involve feelings of completion or loss. But with the proper outlook, considering ourselves as *in the middle* of things can help us not only to understand life a little better but also to live it a little more meaningfully.

## **The Middle of Missionary Work**

When I speak to our young missionaries, I often tell them they are in the middle of their missions. Whether they just arrived the day before or are to depart for home the day after, I ask them to think of themselves as always being in the middle.

New missionaries may feel they are too inexperienced to be effective, and so they delay speaking or acting with confidence and boldness. Seasoned missionaries who are close to completing their missions may feel sad their missions are coming to a close, or they may slow down as they contemplate what they will do after their missions.

Whatever the circumstances and wherever they serve, the truth is that the Lord's missionaries are daily sowing countless seeds of good tidings. Thinking of themselves as

always being in the middle of their missions will embolden and energize these faithful representatives of the Lord. As it is with full-time missionaries, so it is with all of us.

## **We Are Always in the Middle**

This change in perspective is more than a simple trick of the mind. There is a sublime truth behind the idea that we are always in the middle. If we look at our location on a map, we are tempted to say we are at a beginning. But if we look more closely, wherever we are is simply in the middle of a larger place.

As it is with space, so it is with time. We may feel we are at the beginning or end of our lives, but when we look at where we are against the backdrop of eternity—when we realize that our spirit has existed for time beyond our capacity to measure and, because of the perfect sacrifice and Atonement of Jesus Christ, that our soul will exist for an eternity to come—we can recognize that we are truly in the middle.

Recently I felt impressed to redo the headstone on my parents' grave. Time had not been kind to the grave site, and I felt that a new headstone would be more fitting for their exemplary lives. When I looked at the birth dates and death dates on the headstone connected by the usual insignificant little dash, this small symbol of a lifespan suddenly filled my mind and heart with an



abundance of rich memories. Each of these treasured memories reflects a moment in the middle of my parents' lives and in the middle of my life.

Whatever our age, whatever our location, when things occur in our lives, we are always in the middle. What's more, we will forever be in the middle.

### The Hope of Being in the Middle

Yes, there will be moments of beginnings and moments of endings throughout our lives, but these are only markers along the way of the great middle of our eternal lives. Whether we are at the beginning or the end, whether we are young or old, the Lord can use us for His purposes if we simply set aside whatever thoughts limit our ability to serve and allow His will to shape our lives.

The Psalmist says, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we [should] rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). Amulek reminds us that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold *the day of this life* is the day for men to perform their labors" (Alma 34:32; emphasis added). And a poet muses, "Forever—is composed of Nows."<sup>1</sup>

Being always in the middle means that the game is never over, hope is never lost, defeat is never final. For no matter where we are or what our circumstances, an eternity of beginnings and an eternity of endings stretch out before us.

We are always in the middle. ■

#### NOTE

1. Emily Dickinson, "Forever—is composed of Nows," in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (1960), 624.

### TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Consider discussing with the family how they are "always in the middle," even if they are beginning or ending something. Encourage them to do their best on their current activities, not dwelling on the past or waiting for the next activity or project. You may want to suggest they choose one thing they can do to implement this counsel and set a date to achieve their goal.

## YOUTH

### In the Middle of Your Preparation for a Mission

President Uchtdorf tells missionaries to think of themselves as being in the middle of their missions. You can also apply this idea to your mission preparation: whether you are 12 or 18, you can prepare to serve a mission.

What are some things you can do “in the middle” of your mission preparation?

- Always be worthy to attend the temple.
- Learn to recognize promptings from the Holy Ghost by writing down your promptings and acting on them.
- Pray for the missionaries.
- Ask the missionaries in your area what they recommend you do to prepare to serve a mission.
- Learn to manage your time effectively, including important activities such as service, scripture study, and journal writing.
- When talking with a family member, share a scripture that inspired you recently. Explain what you think about the scripture.
- Ask your friends about their religions and what they believe. Be willing to share your beliefs. Invite them to church or activities.

As you recognize that you are in the middle of your mission preparation, you can live your life to be more worthy of the Lord’s trust and the Spirit’s companionship.



## CHILDREN

### Everyone Can Do Something Now

1. President Uchtdorf teaches that no matter your age, you can do something to help others. In your journal or on a piece of paper, list your gifts or abilities. Ask your parents what they think your gifts are.
2. Decide how you could use your gifts to help others in the situations below.



3. At the end of your list of gifts, write one way you can use those gifts to help others this week.

