

# Don't Run Away

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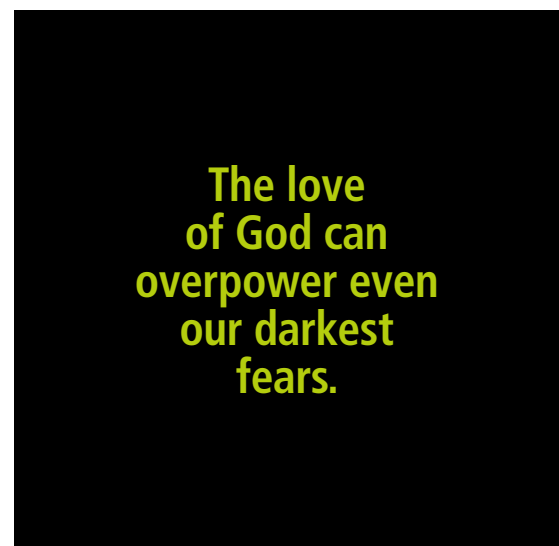
One of my vivid memories from early childhood is of my teenage brother on a white hospital bed, his cheekbones casting deep shadows down his face. I remember feeling terror and shock. He didn't look like the cheerful brother who sat on the curb with me eating cucumbers. His face personified death.

Nine years later, my sister closest to me in age succumbed to the same heart disease that made my brother ill. Though not a toddler anymore, I was still a child, and I watched as her life faded from her cheeks and she became increasingly frail.

I am grateful every day that my brother and sister received the heart transplants they needed so their time in this life could be extended. I have been immensely blessed by my brother's hardworking example and my sister's unbounded generosity.

I've also been running away—literally—for a long time. I have the same heart problem that afflicted my brother and sister, and my father woke me up at dawn every day before elementary school so that I could go running with him to keep my heart healthy. I grew up dreading the day when I would lie on a hospital bed while my heart stopped.

But I wasn't afraid of death; I was afraid I would not accomplish all the good I was sent to do while alive. When I received my patriarchal blessing as a teenager, I received many reassuring promises. My blessing spoke of the "great work" Heavenly Father has for me, but it never gave specific details about what that great work entailed. Mormon taught his son that we all "have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay" (Moroni 9:6), and I often agonized that I didn't have enough faith to fulfill my "labor" during what I assumed would



be my limited life span. I searched for years to discover my specific work so that I could be sure to have it finished before my time in mortality was through. I was so worried about disappointing Heavenly Father.

## Love Casts Out Fear

These fears weren't resolved when I was a youth, but I found

many comforting scriptures during my study as a full-time missionary. Particularly, I found inspiration in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who also faced the threat of his life being shortened. The Lord's words to him also comforted me: "Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not . . . , for God shall be with you forever and ever" (D&C 122:9).

As I continued to study my scriptures diligently, a line from the Bible Dictionary inspired me. It suggested that my fear was "unworthy of a child of God."<sup>1</sup> Through the scriptures I also learned that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear" (2 Timothy 1:7) and that "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). These teachings became very real to me on my mission. Whenever I saw someone

walking down the street and felt the need to share my testimony with him or her, I also felt a stab of fear. But I learned to identify the source of my fear, and I knew that I wanted to choose to follow Christ instead of coddle my anxiety. Time after time, I watched as God took my imperfect efforts to share the gospel and worked miracles through my words and actions.



***No amount of running will ever make my heart normal. But I don't have to run away from my fear anymore.***



## BLESSED TO HUSH OUR FEARS

“The peace Christ gives allows us to view mortality through

the precious perspective of eternity and supplies a spiritual settledness (see Colossians 1:23) that helps us maintain a consistent focus on our heavenly destination. Thus, we can be blessed to hush our fears because His doctrine provides purpose and direction in all aspects of our lives. His ordinances and covenants fortify and comfort in times both good and bad. And His priesthood authority gives assurance that the things that matter most can endure both in time and in eternity.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Therefore They Hushed Their Fears,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 47.

I grew to understand more about the plan of salvation and that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). I do not have perfect love for Heavenly Father, but He has shown that He has perfect love for me and that His love has power to drive out fear—even when I visit the doctor’s office and find my heart condition has worsened. Heavenly Father does not want me to live my life in fear, nor does He want me to doubt His loving plan.

### The Atonement of Jesus Christ in My Life

As a teenager, I worried that my “great work” was a grandiose task that I needed to intuit and execute perfectly. Now I take comfort in what the Savior taught Hyrum Smith: “Behold, this is your work, to keep

my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength” (D&C 11:20). By observing these “small and simple things”—namely, keeping the commandments—I find that truly “great things [are] brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

The more I try to keep the commandments, the more I witness the miracle of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in my life. I try to remember each day that “now is the time and the day of [my] salvation” and that insofar as I “repent and harden not [my heart], immediately [is] the great plan of redemption” made real in my life (Alma 34:31). My continued repentance prepares me to meet my Heavenly Father and Savior when my time is finished. Elder F. Enzo Busche, emeritus member of the Seventy, taught, “Thus, we prepare all the days of our lives, and, as we grow, death loses its sting, hell loses its power, and we look forward to that day with anticipation and joy when [Christ] will come in his glory.”<sup>2</sup>

No amount of running will ever make my heart normal. But I don’t have to run away from my fear anymore. Rather, I can conquer my fear through Christ and say, “In God I have put my trust; I will not fear” (Psalm 56:4). ■

#### NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, “Fear.”
2. F. Enzo Busche, “Unleashing the Dormant Spirit,” in *Brigham Young University 1995–96 Speeches* (1996), 228.

