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# Neither Trust in the Arm of Flesh

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In the preface of the Doctrine and Covenants, we learn about the limitations of the arm of flesh: “The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh” (D&C 1:19). To rephrase that warning: even though you may be learned in the ways of the world, don't forget the power of God.

My medical school classmates and I learned that lesson in an unforgettable way more than 30 years ago. Our experience took place in the little town of Manzanillo, on Mexico's western coast. The year was 1978. The members of our 1947 graduating class, along with our spouses, were attending a medical symposium.

One evening after the scientific sessions had been completed, one of the doctors suddenly became seriously ill. Without warning, he began to lose massive amounts of blood from his stomach. Totally stunned, we surrounded him, watching life's precious blood flow from him. There we were, medical specialists skilled in various disciplines, including surgeons, anesthesiologists, and internists, each with wisdom gained through more than 30 years of experience. What could we do? The nearest hospital was in Guadalajara, more than 100 mountainous miles (160 km) away. It was night.

No planes could fly. Blood transfusions were out of the question because of lack of equipment. All of our combined knowledge could not be mobilized to stop his hemorrhage. We were totally without the facilities or equipment needed to save the life of our beloved friend.

Our stricken colleague, a faithful Latter-day Saint, was well aware of his plight. Ashen and pale, he whispered a request for a priesthood blessing. Several of us held the Melchizedek Priesthood. We responded to his request immediately. I was asked to seal the anointing. The Spirit dictated that he be blessed to the end that the bleeding would stop and that he would continue to live and return to his home. That blessing was administered in the name of the Lord.

By the next morning, his condition had improved. Miraculously, the bleeding had stopped. His blood pressure had returned to normal. In a couple of days, he was able to return to his home. Unitedly, we thanked the Lord for this most remarkable blessing.

The lesson we learned was simple: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). We experienced it firsthand. This doctrine, taught repeatedly in the scriptures,<sup>1</sup> had now become our sure knowledge.

Please do not misunderstand me, brothers and sisters. Of course we need to prepare for worthy work to do. Yes, we do need to do our work well, whatever we choose to do in life. We need to be able to render significant service. And before we can achieve that competence, we need an education. With us, education is a religious responsibility. The glory of God *really* is intelligence (see D&C 93:36).

But the learning of man has its limitations. And sometimes, as in our circumstance in rural Mexico, the combined learning of many experts cannot be applied when we need it most. We have to place our trust in the Lord.

That experience in Mexico taught us another important lesson. It pertains to our ultimate priorities and highest destinies as mortal beings. We learned that a doctor's ultimate destination is not in the hospital. For a lawyer, it is not in the courtroom. For a jet pilot, it is not in the cockpit of a Boeing 747. Each person's chosen occupation is only a means to an end; it is not an end in itself.

The end for which each of you should strive is to be the person that you can become—the person who God wants you to be. The day will come when your professional career will end. The career that you will have labored so hard to achieve—the work that will have supported you and your family—will one day be behind you.

Then you will have learned this great lesson: much more important than what you do for a living is what kind of person you become. When you leave this frail existence, what you have become will matter most. Attributes such as “faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence” (D&C



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4:6) will all be weighed in the Lord’s balance.

From time to time, ask yourself these questions: “Am I ready to meet my Maker?” “Am I worthy of all the blessings He has in store for His faithful children?” “Have I received my endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple?” “Have I remained faithful to my covenants?” “Have I qualified for the greatest of all God’s blessings—the blessing of eternal life?” (see D&C 14:7).

Those who cherish their faith in God—those who trust in Him—have been given this scriptural promise: “Let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God. . . . These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever” (D&C 76:61–62). May that be the ultimate destiny for each of us. ■

*From a Brigham Young University commencement address delivered on April 23, 2009.*

#### NOTE

1. See, for example, Proverbs 11:28; Jeremiah 17:5; Romans 8:1; 2 Nephi 4:34–35; 2 Nephi 28:31; D&C 1:19–23.