



By Elder
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FINDING HOPE IN A TROUBLED FAMILY

No matter what you have been through or are going through now, thanks to the Savior you can know there are better days ahead.



As a boy (below), I wondered if the Lord knew our troubled family. When I was a teen (left), I learned that salvation could come to our home, as it had for Zaccheus (far right).



A perfect example of the power of hope is the story of King Lamoni's father in the Book of Mormon. He didn't even know if there was a God.

But with a sense of hope he prayed, "If there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18).

He hoped there was a God. He hoped he was being taught the truth. Eventually he and his household were converted. Then he opened his entire kingdom for the preaching of the gospel, and thousands of people joined the church. (See Alma 23:1–5.) He had found hope, and that hope changed his life.

Like Zaccheus?

When I was a child in Scotland, I was also looking for hope. We were a poor, little family—my mother and four children, of which I was the oldest. After my parents' divorce when I was five, there came a stepfather who was not a good man. We hadn't experienced much love at home. My mother cleaned houses to make ends meet. Life was tough.

When I was 10, I went to a gospel mission hall. The teacher was without question a disciple of Jesus Christ. One Sunday he taught us about Zaccheus. The Savior visited Zaccheus at home, and Zaccheus became a changed man. He said that he gave away half of his goods to the poor and that if he had wronged any man, he gave back four times as much as he had taken. Jesus said salvation had come to the house of Zaccheus, "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Although I was young, I found myself wondering if salvation could come to *my* home. Did Jesus know me? If I was lost, could He find me?

How I Found Hope

Then when I was 12, Latter-day Saint missionaries started visiting us. Whenever they were in our home, we felt a sense of peace and sheer goodness. Those were unusual



feelings for us at that time. I wanted those feelings in my life all of the time, not just when the elders were with us.

I started to believe that salvation *could* come to our home. The missionaries helped me understand that Heavenly Father knows each of us individually. They explained that He is so anxious to bless us that He sent His Son to save us. I felt that the Savior *had* found us. I embraced the gospel with gratitude and was baptized a month before my 13th birthday. I received the Aaronic Priesthood and started to pass the sacrament, which seemed like a great honor, knowing that the first sacrament was blessed and passed by Jesus Himself.

I felt as though our family expanded to include the entire ward. We were immediately given opportunities to serve, and it was a wonderful feeling. Through my early Church life I gained hope. There *were* better days ahead. It was possible to feel a sense of belonging. We were important to Heavenly Father.

Our life didn't suddenly change. We still had difficulties—of course we did. My mother married another bad man, an alcoholic, so there were still hard days and harsh times. But I now had an entirely different sense about the future. The gospel allowed me to rise above my challenges and feel abiding peace.

I couldn't do anything about the family circumstances of my youth—alcoholism, poverty, and divorce. But when I was 15, I made a major decision: "I will change the future—for myself and for the children I will someday have. My unhappy family history will not be passed on."

The good news is that you get to shape your future. Whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever your condition may be, you can have a happy and fulfilled life if you stay close to the gospel and place your faith in Jesus Christ.

Changing the Future

I couldn't do anything about the family circumstances of my youth—alcoholism, poverty, and divorce. But when I was 15, I made a major decision: "I will change the future—for myself and for the children I will someday have. My unhappy family history will not be passed on." I felt the Holy Ghost prompting me to build a good life.

As young people, we go through all kinds of situations. Mine were quite dramatic and might not apply to everyone. But there will be something that affects each person deeply. Bad things can happen to good people. You may feel a quiet desperation, or you may feel that your life looks bleak.

The good news is that you get to shape your future. Whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever your condition may be, you can have a happy and fulfilled life if you stay close to the gospel and place your faith in Jesus Christ. In Gethsemane He experienced total agony—mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional—all of that piled on top of Him. I can't describe it because it is indescribable,



As I continued to grow in the gospel, I found it prepared me not only for life as a young man, but also for the happy family life I enjoy today.

but He did it. And because of what He endured, He understands when we're suffering, anxious, hurt, afraid, sick, injured, or abused. He understands everything. He will help you.

In many dark midnight hours, during my teenage years and also later in life, there have been times when I have felt as though I were weeping at the Savior's feet, pleading for a blessing. Figuratively I have felt Him leaning down, picking me up, putting His arms around me, and blessing me with love. And this I know: as His disciple you are entitled to His help and He will turn everything to your good. That is the hope of the gospel. **NE**

HOW YOU CAN FIND HOPE

Start with desire. "Even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27).

Be obedient. The little things are big things—pray, read the scriptures, come to church. These things entitle you to blessings.

Seek the Holy Ghost. He does everything in His power to give us direction.

Repent of sins.

Get on the path that will lead you to the Savior, and stay on that path.

Focus on the future (see Philippians 3:13).

Put the past behind you and concentrate on what you can do now. Smile. Be optimistic. Be cheerful.

Go to the temple. Be there as often as you can. Feel the comfort it brings.

Know that you are known. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ know each of us. They want us to be happy and to return to live with Them again.

Trust in the Lord's promises. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).