

WAVES OF

BY ELDER R. CONRAD SCHULTZ
Of the Seventy

Why wear a life jacket on a calm sea? The answer came out of nowhere.



I shouted a warning before a huge wave hit us broadside. Somehow the boat stayed upright, but Gary was thrown overboard.

In this world, things are not always what they appear to be. We sometimes are unaware of the powerful forces pulling on us. Appearances can be deceptive.

A few years ago I had an experience with deceptive appearances where the results could have been tragic. My wife's cousin and family were visiting us from Utah. It was a calm summer day on the Oregon coast, and we were fishing in the ocean. It was pleasant, and we were having a good time catching salmon, when for some reason I turned around to see a huge eight-foot wave bearing down upon us. I had time only to shout a warning before the wave hit us broadside. Somehow the boat stayed upright, but Gary, our cousin, was thrown overboard. We were all wearing life jackets and with some difficulty

maneuvered the boat, half filled with water, to where he was floating and pulled him aboard.

We had been hit by what is called a sneaker wave. It doesn't happen often, and there is no way to predict it. Later we found that up and down the Oregon-Washington coast, five people had drowned that day in three separate boating accidents. All were caused by the same sneaker wave, which for no apparent reason had welled up off the ocean surface. At the time we went out, the ocean was flat and calm and gave no sign of any danger. But the ocean turned out to be deceptive and not at all what it appeared to be.

More Sneaky than Waves

As we make our way through this life's

DECEPTION



journey, we must continually be on guard and watch for those things that are deceptive and not what they appear to be. If we are not careful, the sneaker waves in life can be as deadly as those in the ocean.

One of the sneaky ploys of the adversary is to have us believe that unquestioning obedience to the principles and commandments of God is blind obedience. His goal is to have us believe that we should be following our own worldly ways and selfish ambitions. This he does by persuading us that “blindly” following the prophets and obeying the commandments is not thinking for ourselves. He teaches that it is not intelligent to do something just because we are told to do so by a living prophet or by prophets who speak to us from the scriptures.

Our unquestioning obedience to the Lord’s commandments is not blind obedience. President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught us about this in the April 1983 conference: “Latter-day Saints are

not obedient because they are compelled to be obedient. They are obedient because they know certain spiritual truths and have decided, as an expression of their own individual agency, to obey the commandments of God. . . . We are not obedient because we are blind, we are obedient because we can see.”¹

We might call this “faith obedience.” With faith, Abraham was obedient in preparing Isaac for sacrifice; with faith, Nephi was obedient in obtaining the brass plates; with faith, a little child obediently jumps from a height into the strong arms of his father. “Faith obedience” is a matter of trust. The question is simple: Do we trust our Heavenly Father? Do we trust our prophets?

God’s Wisdom

Another of the adversary’s deceptions is to have us believe that the wisdom and the learning of the world is the only source of knowledge we should follow. The prophet Nephi’s brother Jacob understood the adversary’s



plan and warned us about it:

“O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish” (2 Nephi 9:28).

Jacob did not say that we should not be learned. He went on to tell us that it is good to be learned if we hearken to the counsels of God (see 2 Nephi 9:29).

Some come to believe that you may pick and choose which of God’s commandments to follow. They conveniently label many commandments as little things that can be put off and that don’t appear to be life-threatening or too important. Things like saying our prayers, honoring the Sabbath, reading the scriptures, paying our tithing, attending our meetings, and the list goes on.

Our Heavenly Father communicates in a very clear way to His children. In the teachings of the gospel, there is no uncertain sound, of which the Apostle Paul speaks (see 1 Corinthians 14:8).

There is no question regarding the meaning of what is being said or of feelings prompted by the Spirit. We have not been left alone. We have the scriptures, the prophets, loving parents, and leaders.

How Not to Be Deceived

Why do we sometimes stray? Why do we let ourselves be influenced by the deception of the adversary? The solution to his deception is simple in its answer, but sometimes it is difficult in its application. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) spoke of the Lord, the adversary, and the solution to the adversary’s power of deception:

“We have some tight places to go before the Lord is through with this church and the world in this dispensation. . . . The power of Satan will increase; we see it in evidence on every hand. . . . We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet. . . . There will be some things that take patience and faith.”²

Then President Lee added a warning when he went on to say that we may not always like what comes from



the authority of the Church because it may conflict with our personal views or interfere with some of our social life. However, if we will listen to and do these things as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, we will not be deceived and great blessings will be ours.

Wear Your Life Jacket

It brings us back to obedience. It will always be so. It's part of the plan of eternal happiness. I know of no doctrine that is more critical to our well-being in this life and the next. All scriptures teach obedience, and every Apostle and prophet who has ever lived has taught the principle of obedience.

Sometimes it is necessary to be obedient even when we do not understand the reason for the law. It takes faith to be obedient. The Prophet Joseph Smith, in teaching obedience, said that "whatever God requires is right . . . although we may not

see the reason thereof till long after."³

I am grateful that we had on our life jackets that summer day on the ocean. I am thankful we were able to avoid the tragedy that came from that sneaker wave. It is my prayer that we will continue to wear our life jackets of obedience in order to avoid the tragedy that will surely come if we are deceived and follow the enticings of the adversary.

I witness to you that our Father in Heaven lives, that He loves us, and that by being unquestioningly obedient to His commandments, we can once again dwell with Him and His Son Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. **NE**

From an April 2002 general conference address.

For more on obedience and agency, see this month's Q&A on page 14 of this issue.

NOTES

1. *Ensign*, May 1983, 66.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 152.
3. *History of the Church*, 5:135.

Our life jackets of faithful obedience can help us to avoid the tragedy that surely will come if we are deceived and follow the enticings of the adversary.