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**L**ife can be awesome, but sometimes it can also be hard. For as many wonderful things that we experience, we also have heartaches, make mistakes, lose friendships, or don't make the grade in some way.

Nobody really *wants* those kinds of pains, and nobody can avoid them. Even prophets and apostles go through them. But here's something really cool: when we look at the challenges they've faced and how they learned from those difficulties, we can see how we can learn from our experiences, too—especially with the Lord's help. And if we turn to the Lord in difficult times and seek His help, He can do marvelous things with our lives.

Here are three examples from living prophets and apostles who shared lessons they've learned through experience.

# LIFE LESSONS from Apostles

*Facing tough challenges? The prophets and apostles have faced them, too.*





## NOT TAKING OURSELVES TOO SERIOUSLY

*As a youth, President Thomas S. Monson enjoyed playing sports. However, the games didn't always go as well as he might have hoped. His interactions with others gave him opportunities to learn important lessons.*

"I share with you an experience that embarrassed, a game that was lost, and a lesson in not taking ourselves too seriously.

"First, in a basketball game when the outcome was in doubt, the coach sent me onto the playing floor right after the second half began. I took an in-bounds pass, dribbled the ball toward the key, and let the shot fly. Just as the ball left my fingertips, I realized why the opposing guards did not attempt to stop my drive: I was shooting for the wrong basket! I offered a silent prayer: 'Please, Father, don't let that ball go in.' The ball rimmed the hoop and fell out.

"From the bleachers came the call: 'We want Monson, we want Monson, we want Monson—*out!*' The coach obliged. . . .

"I fared much better at fast-pitch softball. My most memorable experience in softball was a thirteen-inning game I pitched in Salt Lake City on a hot Memorial Day. The game was scheduled for just seven innings, but the tied score could not be broken. In the last of the thirteenth, with two men out and a runner on third, the batter hit a high pop fly to left field. The catch was certain, I thought. And yet the ball fell through the hands of the left fielder. For thirty-eight years I have teased my friend who dropped the ball. I have promised myself I will never do so again. I'm not even going to mention his name. After all, he, too, remembers. It was only a game."<sup>1</sup>



*President Thomas S. Monson, 1944*



## BEING WILLING TO LISTEN AND LEARN



Elder M. Russell Ballard,  
1948

*Sometimes Heavenly Father provides us an opportunity to avoid challenges—if we are willing to listen and learn. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once faced this very dilemma.*

“Years ago when I was in business, I learned a very expensive lesson because I did not listen carefully to the counsel of my father, nor did I heed the promptings of the Spirit giving me guidance from my Heavenly Father. My father and I were in the automobile business, and the Ford Motor Company was looking for dealers to sell their new line of cars. Ford executives invited my father and me to a preview showing of what they thought would be a spectacularly successful product. When we saw the cars, my father, who had over 35 years’ experience in the business, cautioned me about becoming a dealer. However, the Ford sales personnel were very persuasive, and I chose to become Salt Lake City’s first—and actually last—Edsel dealer. And if you don’t know what an Edsel

is, ask your grandpa. He will tell you that the Edsel was a spectacular failure.

“Now, there’s a powerful lesson for all of you in this experience. When you are willing to listen and learn, some of life’s most meaningful teachings come from those who have gone before you. They have walked where you are walking and have experienced many of the things you are experiencing. If you listen and respond to their counsel, they can help guide you toward choices that will be for your benefit and blessing and steer you away from decisions that can destroy you. As you look to your parents and others who have gone before you, you will find examples of faith, commitment, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice that you should strive to duplicate.”<sup>2</sup>

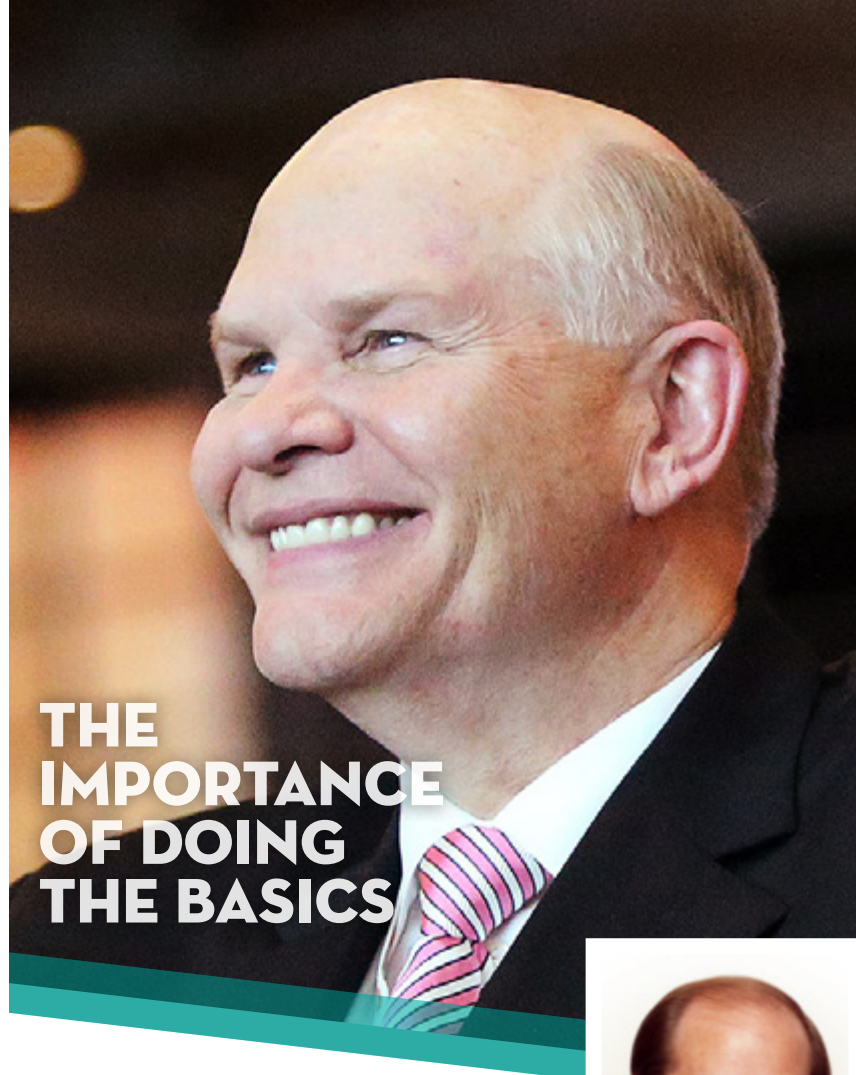
*Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles learned a significant lesson about the influence of daily prayer and scripture study in our lives and how we choose to honor the Sabbath day. As a heart transplant doctor, he often had to work on Sundays to save lives, like many people in health care.*

“In 1980 we moved as a family across the street from the hospital where I trained and worked. I worked every day, including Sundays. If I finished my Sunday work by 2:00 p.m., I could join my wife and daughter and drive to church for meetings that began at 2:30.

“One Sunday late in my first year of training, I knew that I would likely finish by 2:00. I realized, however, that if I stayed in the hospital just a little longer, my wife and daughter would depart without me. I could then walk home and take a needed nap. I regret to say that I did just that. I waited until 2:15, walked home slowly, and lay down on the couch, hoping to nap. But I could not fall asleep. I was disturbed and concerned. I had always loved going to church. I wondered why on this day the fire of testimony and the zeal that I had previously felt were missing.

“I did not have to think long. Because of my schedule, I had become casual with my prayers and scripture study. I would get up one morning, say my prayers, and go to work. Often day blended into night and into day again before I would return home late the following evening. I would then be so tired that I would fall asleep before saying a prayer or reading the scriptures. The next morning the process began again. The problem was that I was not doing the basic things I needed to do to keep my mightily changed heart from turning to stone.

“I got off the couch, got on my knees, and pleaded with God for forgiveness. I promised



my Heavenly Father that I would change. The next day I brought a Book of Mormon to the hospital. On my to-do list that day, and every day since, were two items: praying at least morning and evening and reading in the scriptures. Sometimes midnight would come, and I would have to quickly find a private place to pray. Some days my scripture study was brief. I also promised Heavenly Father that I would always try to get to church, even if I missed part of the meeting. Over the course of a few weeks, the zeal returned and the fire of testimony burned fiercely again. I promised to never again fall into the spiritual death trap of being casual about these seemingly small actions and thereby jeopardizing things of an eternal nature, regardless of circumstances.”<sup>3</sup> NE



Elder Dale G. Renlund,  
1983

#### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Goal beyond Victory,” Oct. 1988 general conference.
2. M. Russell Ballard, Apr. 2009 general conference.
3. Dale G. Renlund, Oct. 2009 general conference.