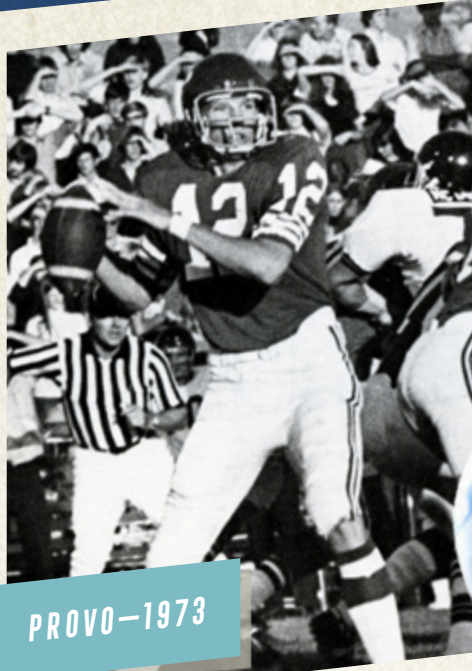




By Elder S. Gifford Nielsen
Of the Seventy



MY QUARTERBACK QUESTION

You are facing big decisions in your life.
How do you make them?

I learned important lessons about life through playing sports, whether I was shooting hoops with a friend or playing on basketball and football teams. One of the lessons I learned was how to make decisions. For example, I grew up loving to play basketball more than football and played college basketball for two years. When I was given the opportunity to participate in college football, I knew I had to commit to one or the other, and I had questions about what I should do.

Many of you are asking questions of your own: Where should I go to school? What should be my major? When should I go on my mission? How do I pay for my mission? Who am I supposed to marry? How can I help my friends? How do I work through my challenges? How do I strengthen my testimony of the restored gospel? Is Jesus Christ there for me? How do I stand up for my values? There are so many questions.

ASK GOD

The only way I know how to make big decisions in life is to do exactly what Heavenly Father and the Savior invite us to do: ask Them. Then record the impressions you receive.

One of my favorite scriptures in the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 32:9, teaches this principle: “But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.”

My parents taught me that when I needed to make a big decision in my life, I should get out a piece of paper and a pencil, draw a line down the middle of the paper, and then write down the pros on one side and the cons on the other. After that, I was taught to call upon Heavenly Father to help inspire my thoughts. I learned to keep writing the pluses and minuses on both sides of the paper about the decision I was making, and to take my time. I found that as I did this with patience, it was amazing to see how the Lord revealed thoughts that were not originally there to help me with the process. Finally, when I made my decision, I went to the Lord again in prayer and took time to just listen, so I could sense if He agreed with my decision.

TRUST GOD

We don't always understand what the Lord is revealing at the time that He's giving us inspired thoughts. If you had asked me before I sought heaven's help about my decision, and I had been told to stop playing basketball and



BYU—1977



TRY THIS: When you need to make a big decision, get a piece of paper and pencil, draw a line down the middle of the paper, and then write down the pros on one side and the cons on the other. After that, call upon Heavenly Father to help inspire your thoughts.



BYU—1976



HOUSTON—1986

to start playing college football, I would have thought, “Are you crazy? Why would I do that?” But that was the prompting the Lord gave me. Even though I didn’t know why, I knew by the confirming feeling in my heart that I was doing what the Lord wanted me to do. I had gone through a process that allowed me to have confidence in my choice. That knowledge helped me through some rough times.

I had done well as our high school quarterback and was also the captain of the basketball team. I enjoyed the victories and learned from the defeats, but for the first time in my life I failed when I started playing football at BYU. I struggled in football, and I questioned myself: “Did I make the right choice?” I had to answer: “Yes, I made the right choice; I had a confirmation.” But the harder I tried, the worse it got. Through it all, I turned to prayer and leaned on the scripture: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6).

After I went through more hard knocks, challenges, and tests, everything came together, and we started winning football games. With that success, I learned to trust the coach, my teammates, and myself as I gained confidence and became accountable for my responsibilities.


HOW TO USE THE PROCESS


From those experiences, I came to know the power of prayer. You can come to know the power of prayer in your life. You need to know that Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, are willing and ready to help you, but you have to go through the process of finding an answer. I promise that if you seek earnestly and humbly, you will find answers to your questions.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:63–64 gives us a pattern to follow. The Lord extends invitations followed by promises. “Draw near unto me” is the invitation; “and I will draw near unto you” is the promise. The invitation: “Seek me diligently”; the promise: “Ye shall find me.” The invitation: “Ask”; the promise: “and ye shall receive.” “Knock” is the invitation, and the promise is “it shall be opened unto you.” In verse 64 it says, “Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient [necessary] for you.”

WHO IS ELDER NIELSEN?

Born in **PROVO, UTAH**, on October 25, 1954.


Attended **PROVO HIGH SCHOOL**, where he was the quarterback. He also led the Bulldogs to the 1973 state basketball championship. 


 Attended **BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY**. Played basketball for two years; then was asked to play football, becoming an All-American.



MARRIED Wendy Olson in April 1975. They have 6 children and 25 grandchildren.

Received his **BACHELOR'S DEGREE** in 1977.

Selected by the **HOUSTON OILERS** in the third round of the 1978 NFL draft. Played six seasons as **QUARTERBACK** for the Oilers. 

After leaving the NFL, was the **SPORTS DIRECTOR** at CBS affiliate KHOU in Houston for 25 years. 

Has served in numerous **CHURCH CALLINGS**, including seminary teacher, elders quorum president, Young Men president, Sunday School president, counselor in a mission presidency, bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy.

Sustained as a **GENERAL AUTHORITY SEVENTY** of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 6, 2013.

I have repeated that pattern many times in my life. For example, when I had the opportunity to play professional football in the National Football League, I turned again to prayer for guidance. I asked Heavenly Father for help because I was the only member of the Church on the team, and I knew I needed to be able to work with my teammates and to get along with them. I received the answer that I should tell them what I believe in and that everything would be OK.

When I let my teammates know about my beliefs, they began to understand and have respect for my standards. In many cases they wanted to know more, and I found the answers to their questions by studying the scriptures. These friends were always there to support and encourage me.

You may be tested to see what's inside of you, and others may test you to see how firm you are. When you choose to build your life upon the foundation of the Savior and build your testimony by praying, feasting on the words of Christ, and choosing good friends, you can rise above temptations that come your way. People are looking for leaders with integrity, and as you choose to be obedient, you can become strong, powerful leaders that our world needs.

WE CAN CHOOSE

We live in an interesting time filled with peer pressure, difficult choices, temptations, and challenges of every kind. Sometimes it can feel overwhelming, but because of Jesus Christ's Atonement, we are free forever. We can know good from evil, act for ourselves, and not be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26–27). How do you feel when you make righteous choices? How do you feel when you make unrighteous choices? We must learn how to make virtuous decisions while still being an athlete, an officer, a musician, a student, a family member, or a friend. In every situation we face, we can choose to do what is right.

The world will constantly tell you to choose a path different from the one the Lord wants you to pursue. Who will you follow? I have found that happiness comes only from following the Lord and His servants. It comes back to trusting in the Lord with all our hearts. We can do all things with His help. Many people tell you that you can't be humble and have great success. I say that there is nothing more powerful than being humble and submissive to the Lord. You are then led, guided, and directed from heaven. And with His help, you can accomplish anything. **NE**