

Lesson
6

Adversity Can Help Us Grow

Purpose To encourage class members to see trials and adversity as opportunities for growth.

Preparation 1. Prayerfully study Matthew 7:24–27; 2 Nephi 2:11, 22–23; Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.

2. Materials needed: A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher When adversity comes, a young person may sometimes feel that he or she is the only one who has ever had a problem. But all of us chose to come to the earth to be tested and tried, and the adversities we face give us the opportunity to grow and progress. Help class members see that understanding why we experience adversity can help us learn from our trials and disappointments.

Suggested Lesson Development

How Do You React to Adversity?

Story and discussion

Tell or read the following story:

Diane Ellingson loved gymnastics. She worked hard to develop her talent, and she won national (United States) championships while she was in high school and college. She was planning to participate in a national gymnastics tour with several famous gymnasts, but during practice for that tour she came off a vault and landed wrong, breaking her neck. The injury paralyzed her. She would never participate in gymnastics again; she would never even be able to walk again.

- How would you react if something like this happened to you?

Give class members a few moments to respond, then finish the story:

Diane spent five months in the hospital after her accident. During the first few months, she felt despair and frustration. She received a priesthood blessing, which did not promise her that she would be healed but did bring her great peace. Finally she realized, “I can either give up or get on with my life.” She learned to use a wheelchair and take care of herself again. After she got out of the hospital, she went back to college, graduated, and became an elementary school teacher. She also gives talks to young people to help them overcome discouragement and adversity. Diane says, “People always think, ‘You’re so amazing, you’re so incredible,’ but I’m not. . . . You have to take whatever life gives you and deal with it, even if you might not want to. . . . You just learn and that’s what’s so great about time and the healing process. You don’t have to be miraculous.” (See Kendra Kasl Phair, “A Champion Again,” *New Era*, Nov. 1988, 21–25; see also Renon Klossner Hulet, “Matters of Balance,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1992, 63.)

Why Do We Experience Adversity?

Discussion

Remind class members that a few weeks ago they learned about Adam and Eve (see lesson 3).

- What was life like for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? (They did not experience sorrow, pain, sickness, or death; food grew without their effort.)
- What was life like for Adam and Eve after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden? (They had to work hard to grow food and get other things they needed; they became subject to sorrow, pain, sickness, and death.)

Explain that like Adam and Eve after the Fall, we too must work hard, and we will experience sorrow, pain, sickness, and death. When we chose to receive a body and come to earth, we also chose to face adversity. Although our trials are different, every person on the earth faces some kind of adversity.

- Why must we experience adversity?

Quotation

Read or have a class member read the following statement by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Trials, disappointments, sadness, and heartache come to us from two basically different sources. Those who transgress the laws of God will always have those challenges. The other reason for adversity is to accomplish the Lord’s own purposes in our life that we may receive the refinement that comes from testing. . . . [Some trials] are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 18; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16).

Chalkboard discussion

Point out that we can avoid the adversity that comes from the first source, disobedience to the commandments of God. We do this by making righteous choices.

- What kinds of adversity can we choose to avoid?

List class members’ responses in a column on the chalkboard. Responses may include bad health or addiction because of breaking the Word of Wisdom, family quarrels because of selfishness and greed, guilt or punishment because of breaking the law of the land, or any other adversity brought on by our own poor choices.

Explain that if we are facing adversity that comes from sin, we should work toward repenting of that sin. Repenting of the sin will help remove or reduce the adversity. (You may need to point out that sometimes we face adversity brought on by other people’s sins. Because each person is free to choose his or her own actions, this kind of adversity comes under the second category, below.)

- What kinds of adversity might come to us regardless of our own choices?

List class members’ responses in a second column on the chalkboard. Responses may include many kinds of disease or disability, injuries or financial losses caused by accidents or weather, and disappointment from not receiving a hoped-for opportunity or blessing.

Explain that while we cannot choose to avoid these kinds of trials, we can determine how we will react to them. If we regard our trials as opportunities to learn and grow, they can become blessings for us.

We Can Learn and Grow through Adversity

Scripture discussion

Explain that Lehi's son Jacob suffered trials and sorrow because of his older brothers (see 2 Nephi 2:1). Lehi explained to Jacob why we need affliction and adversity to learn.

Have class members read and mark (in their own scriptures) 2 Nephi 2:11, 22–23.

- Why must we know misery in order to know joy?
- What are some other opposites we learn about through adversity? (Answers may include sickness and health or sinfulness and righteousness.)
- How have your trials helped you appreciate your blessings?

Chalkboard discussion

Write two headings on the chalkboard: *Trial* and *Lessons to Be Learned*.

Ask class members to suggest some trials people their age might suffer. List these on the chalkboard under the first heading. The list could include doing poorly on a school assignment, breaking an arm or a leg, losing a game, moving away from friends, facing the death of a loved one, or having a long or debilitating disease.

Then discuss with class members lessons that can be learned through each trial. For example, losing a game may teach us humility or give us greater empathy for others who experience disappointment. The death of a loved one may increase our testimony of the plan of salvation. List these lessons on the chalkboard under the second heading, and discuss how each lesson can help us become more like our Father in Heaven and our Savior.

We Can Prepare for Adversity

Quotation and discussion

Have a class member read the following statement by Elder Scott:

“Life never was intended to be easy. Rather, it is a period of proving and growth. It is interwoven with difficulties, challenges, and burdens. . . . Yet these very forces, if squarely faced, provide opportunity for tremendous personal growth and development. The conquering of adversity produces strength of character, forges self-confidence, engenders self-respect, and assures success in righteous endeavor” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 11).

- How can we conquer adversity? (Use the discussion in the rest of this section to help class members answer this question.)

Scripture discussion

Have class members read and mark Matthew 7:24–27.

- How did the man who built his house upon the rock differ from the man who built his house upon sand?

Point out that both houses had to endure the same storms. The difference was the foundation: the house built on the rock was able to weather the storm, while the house built on sand was not.

- What does the rock represent in this parable? (See Matthew 7:24; the teachings of Jesus Christ.) How can faith in Jesus Christ help us in times of adversity?

Discussion

- Although we do not know what specific kinds of adversity we may experience in the future, what can we do to prepare and strengthen ourselves to face adversity?

List class members' responses on the chalkboard. Make sure the following general principles are brought out in the discussion:

1. Everyone will face adversity. When we chose to come to earth, we knew we would be tried and tested here. Realizing that we were willing to endure adversity can help us prepare for and deal with adversity.
2. The best way to prepare for adversity is to build a house upon the rock—to keep the commandments and live according to the doctrines and principles of the gospel.
3. Sincere prayer helps us endure adversity. Sometimes when we are faced with a trial we don't feel like praying, but if we are in the habit of praying sincerely, it will be easier to pray for strength to overcome the trial.
4. In times of adversity we can obtain help from others, such as our parents and other family members, home teachers, and Church leaders. Establishing good relationships with these people before times of adversity will make it easier to turn to them when we need help.

Testimony

Remind class members that everyone faces adversity. Have a class member read aloud Doctrine and Covenants 122:7 to find out what the Lord told Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail about the adversity and afflictions he was facing.

Testify that the adversity we face can help us learn and grow and can be for our good. You may want to tell about some kind of adversity you have faced and how you grew from the experience.

Encourage class members to treat their trials as opportunities to learn and grow.

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Make copies of the crossword puzzle on page 33. Give each class member or pair of class members a copy of the puzzle, and have them look up the scriptures to complete the puzzle. Or put the puzzle on the chalkboard and have the entire class work together to solve it.

Answers:

Across: 1-Smith; 3-peace; 4-Liberty; 6-experience; 7-trust; 8-gain.

Down: 1-small; 2-endure; 3-patient; 5-blessing.

2. Place a lightweight ball (such as a table tennis ball) in the bottom of a large glass jar with a lid. Fill the rest of the jar with uncooked wheat or rice, and put the lid on. Shake the jar up and down. As you do so, the ball will gradually rise to the top of the jar.

Explain that though the ball started at the bottom of the jar, it rose to the top because it is lighter than the wheat that surrounds it. Similarly, if we keep a positive attitude about our trials, we can rise above them instead of being kept down by them.

3. Explain that when we face adversity, it is helpful to remember that Heavenly Father loves us and knows what is best for us. While we may not understand how a particular trial or experience can be for our good, Heavenly Father does understand, and he will help us understand in his own time.

Read or have a class member read the following story told by Elder Hugh B. Brown, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

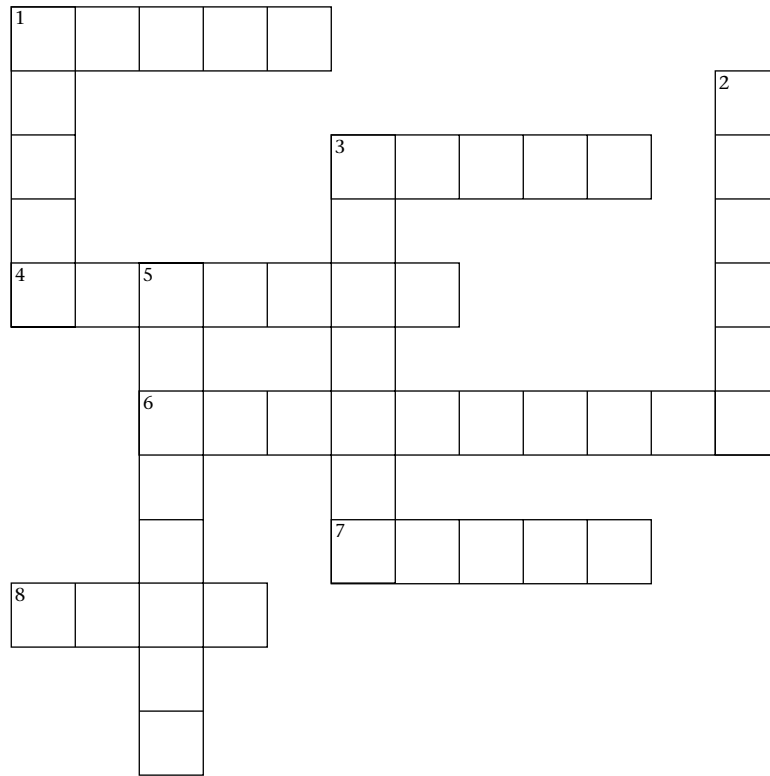
“I was living up in Canada. I had purchased a farm. . . . I went out one morning and saw a currant bush. It had grown up over six feet high. It was going all to wood. There were no blossoms and no currants. I was raised on a fruit farm . . . and I knew what ought to happen to that currant bush. So I got some pruning shears and went after it, and I cut it down, and pruned it, and clipped it back until there was nothing left but a little clump of stumps. It was just coming daylight, and I thought I saw on top of each of these little stumps what appeared to be a tear, and I thought the currant bush was crying. . . . I looked at it, and smiled, and said, ‘What are you crying about?’ You know, I thought I heard that currant bush talk, and I thought I heard it say this: ‘How could you do this to me? I was making such wonderful growth. I was almost as big as the shade tree and the fruit tree that are inside the fence, and now you have cut me down.’ . . . I said, ‘Look, little currant bush, I am the gardener here, and I know what I want you to be. I didn’t intend you to be a fruit tree or a shade tree. I want you to be a currant bush, and some day, little currant bush, when you are laden with fruit, you are going to say, “Thank you, Mr. Gardener”’” (“The Currant Bush,” *New Era*, Jan. 1973, 14).

- How did the gardener show his concern for the currant bush? (He cut it back so that it could produce currants again.)
- How are we like the currant bush? Who is like the gardener?

Explain that Elder Brown followed the story about the currant bush with a similar story from his own life. He had been bitterly disappointed when he was denied a promotion because he was a member of the Church. Years later, he looked back and realized that his life was better than it would have been if he had received the promotion. He was a stronger member of the Church and more the person that Heavenly Father wanted him to be.

Testify that Heavenly Father loves us and knows what is best for each of us. If we strive to live righteously and learn as we endure our trials, these trials will be for our good and help us become the people Heavenly Father wants us to be.

Crossword Puzzle



Complete the crossword puzzle by filling in the blanks in the following statements.

Across

- The first President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was Joseph _____ .
- D&C 121:7: "My son, _____ be unto thy soul."
- Joseph received the revelations found in D&C 121 and 122 in _____ Jail.
- D&C 122:7: "... all these things shall give thee _____ ."
- Proverbs 3:5: "_____ in the Lord."
- 2 Nephi 2:2: "... he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy _____ ."

Down

- D&C 121:7: "... thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a _____ moment."
- D&C 24:8: "... thou shalt have many [afflictions]; but _____ them."
- D&C 24:8: "Be _____ in afflictions."
- D&C 103:12: "After much tribulation ... cometh the _____ ."