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Hope

Our hope in the Atonement empowers us with eternal perspective.

Our family grew up in the high desert country of southern Utah. Rain is rare, and hope abounds that there will be sufficient moisture for the coming heat of summer. Then, as now, we hoped for rain, we prayed for rain, and in dire times, we fasted for rain.

The story is told there of the grandfather who took his five-year-old grandson for a walk around town. Ultimately, they found themselves at a small grocery store on Main Street where they stopped for a cold soda pop. A car from out of state pulled up and the driver approached the old-timer. Pointing to a small cloud in the sky, the stranger asked, “Do you think it’s going to rain?”

“I certainly hope so,” replied the old man, “if not for my sake, for the boy’s. I’ve seen it rain.”

Hope is an emotion which brings richness to our everyday lives. It is defined as “the feeling that . . . events will turn out for the best.” When we exercise hope, we “look forward . . . with desire and reasonable confidence” (dictionary.reference.com/browse/hope). As such, hope brings a certain calming influence to our lives as we confidently look forward to future events.

Sometimes we hope for things over

which we have little or no control. We hope for good weather. We hope for an early spring. We hope our favorite sports team will win the World Cup, the Super Bowl, or the World Series.

Such hopes make our lives interesting and can often lead to unusual, even superstitious behavior. For example, my father-in-law is a huge sports fan, but he is convinced if he *doesn’t* watch his favorite basketball team on television, they are more likely to win. When I was 12 years old, I insisted on wearing the same pair of unwashed socks to every Little League baseball game in the hopes of winning. My mother made me keep them on the back porch.

Other times our hopes can lead to dreams which can inspire us and lead us to action. If we have the hope to do better in school, that hope can be realized by dedicated study and sacrifice. If we have the hope to play on a winning team, that hope can lead to consistent practice, dedication, teamwork, and ultimately success.

Roger Bannister was a medical student in England who had an ambitious hope. He desired to be the first man to run a mile (1.6 km) under four minutes. For much of the first half of the early 20th century, field and track enthusiasts had anxiously awaited the day the four-minute-mile barrier

would be broken. Over the years many outstanding runners had come close, but still the four-minute barrier stood. Bannister dedicated himself to an ambitious training schedule with the hope of realizing his goal of setting a new world record. Some in the sporting community had begun to doubt whether the four-minute mile could be broken. Supposed experts had even hypothesized the human body was physiologically unable to run at such speeds over such a long distance. On a cloudy day on May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister’s great hope was realized! He crossed the finish line in 3:59.4, setting a new world record. His hope to break the four-minute-mile barrier became a dream which was accomplished through training, hard work, and dedication.

Hope can inspire dreams and spur us to realize those dreams. Hope alone, however, does not cause us to succeed. Many honorable hopes have gone unfulfilled, shipwrecked on the reefs of good intentions and laziness.

As parents, we find our fondest hopes center around our children. We hope they will grow up to lead responsible and righteous lives. Such hopes can be easily dashed if we do not act as good examples. Hope alone does not mean our children will grow in righteousness. We must spend time with them in family home evening and worthwhile family activities. We must teach them to pray. We must read with them in the scriptures and teach them important gospel principles. Only then is it possible our fondest hopes will be realized.

We should never let hope be displaced by despair. The Apostle Paul wrote that we “should plow in hope” (1 Corinthians 9:10). The exercise of hope enriches our lives and helps us look forward to the future. Whether



we are plowing fields to plant or plowing through life, it is imperative we, as Latter-day Saints, have hope.

In the gospel of Jesus Christ, hope is the desire of His followers to gain eternal salvation through the Atonement of the Savior.

This is truly the hope we must all have. It is what sets us apart from the rest of the world. Peter admonished the early followers of Christ to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

Our hope in the Atonement empowers us with eternal perspective. Such perspective allows us to look beyond the here and now on into the promise of the eternities. We don’t have to be trapped in the narrow confines of society’s fickle expectations. We are free to look forward to celestial glory, sealed to our family and loved ones.

In the gospel, hope is almost always related to faith and charity. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught: “Hope is one leg of a three-legged stool, together with faith and charity. These three stabilize our lives regardless of the rough or uneven

surfaces we might encounter at the time” (“The Infinite Power of Hope,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 21).

In the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni wrote:

“Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

“And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope” (Moroni 10:20–21).

Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught that “*faith* is rooted in Jesus Christ. *Hope* centers in the Atonement. *Charity* is manifest in the ‘pure love of Christ.’ These three attributes are intertwined like strands in a cable and may not always be precisely distinguished. Together they become our tether to the celestial kingdom” (“A More Excellent Hope,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 61).

When Nephi prophesied of Jesus Christ at the closing of his record, he wrote, “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and

of all men” (2 Nephi 31:20).

This “perfect brightness of hope” of which Nephi speaks is the hope in the Atonement, eternal salvation made possible by the sacrifice of our Savior. This hope has led men and women through the ages to do remarkable things. Apostles of old roamed the earth and testified of Him and ultimately gave their lives in His service.

In this dispensation many early members of the Church left their homes, their hearts full of hope and faith as they made their way west across the Great Plains to the Salt Lake Valley.

In 1851, Mary Murray Murdoch joined the Church in Scotland as a widow at age 67. A small woman at four feet seven inches (1.2 m) tall and barely 90 pounds (41 kg), she bore eight children, six of whom lived to maturity. Because of her size, her children and grandchildren affectionately called her “Wee Granny.”

Her son John Murdoch and his wife joined the Church and left for Utah in 1852 with their two small children. In spite of his family’s own hardships, four years later John sent his mother the necessary funds so she might join the family in Salt Lake City. With a

hope much greater than her small size, Mary began the arduous journey west to Utah at age 73.

After a safe passage across the Atlantic, she ultimately joined the ill-fated Martin handcart company. On July 28 these handcart pioneers began the journey west. The suffering of this company is well known. Of the 576 members of the party, almost one-fourth died before they reached Utah. More would have perished if not for the rescue effort organized by President Brigham Young, who sent wagons and supplies to find the stranded, snowbound Saints.

Mary Murdoch died on October 2, 1856, near Chimney Rock, Nebraska. Here she succumbed to fatigue, exposure, and the hardships of the journey. Her frail body simply gave out under the physical hardships the Saints encountered. As she lay clinging to life, her thoughts were of her family in Utah. The last words of this faithful pioneer woman were “Tell John I died with my face toward Zion.” (See Kenneth W. Merrell, *Scottish Shepherd: The Life and Times of John Murray Murdoch, Utah Pioneer* [2006], 34, 39, 54, 77, 94–97, 103, 112–13, 115.)

Mary Murray Murdoch exemplifies the hope and faith of so many of the early pioneers who made the courageous journey west. The spiritual journeys of today require no less hope or faith than those of the early pioneers. Our challenges may be different, but the struggles are just as great.

It is my prayer that our hopes will lead to the fulfillment of our righteous dreams. I particularly pray our hope in the Atonement will strengthen our faith and charity and give us an eternal perspective of our future. May we all have this perfect brightness of hope, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Larry M. Gibson

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Sacred Keys of the Aaronic Priesthood

The Lord wants every Aaronic Priesthood holder to invite all to come unto Christ—beginning with his own family.

One of my sons, at age 12, decided to raise rabbits. We built cages and acquired one large male and two female rabbits from a neighbor. I had no idea what we were getting into. In a very short time, our shed was bursting with bunnies. Now that my son is grown, I must confess my amazement at how they were controlled—a neighbor’s dog occasionally got into the shed and thinned out the herd.

But my heart was touched as I saw my son and his brothers watch over and protect those rabbits. And now, as husbands and fathers, they are worthy priesthood holders who love, strengthen, and watch over their own families.

My feelings are tender as I observe you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood watching over, supporting, and strengthening those around you, including your families, members of your quorum, and many others. How I love you.

Recently I watched as a 13-year-old young man was set apart as deacons quorum president. Afterward the bishop shook his hand and addressed him as “president,” explaining to the

quorum members that he “addressed him as president to emphasize the sacredness of his calling. The deacons quorum president is one of only four people in the ward who hold keys of presidency. With those keys, he, with his counselors, will lead the quorum under the inspiration of the Lord.” This bishop understood the power of a presidency led by a president who holds and exercises sacred priesthood keys. (See D&C 124:142–43.)

Later I asked this young man if he was ready to preside over this great quorum. His response was: “I’m nervous. I don’t know what a deacons quorum president does. Can you tell me?”

I told him he had a wonderful bishopric and advisers who would help him become a successful and powerful priesthood leader. I knew they would respect the sacred keys of presidency he held.

I then posed this question: “Do you suppose the Lord would call you to this important calling without giving you direction?”

He thought, then responded, “Where do I find it?”

After some discussion, he realized