

Nephi's Story, My Story

Jake's phone call left me brokenhearted, but I found hope in the example of an ancient prophet.

Name withheld

A few years after I had finished college, I found myself sitting in family home evening with other young single adults in my ward. We had been invited to the home of a counselor in our stake presidency, and his wife was giving the lesson.

We were reading the account of Nephi and his brothers going to get the brass plates from Laban (see 1 Nephi 3–5). Our teacher talked about the courage and persistence Nephi exhibited. Then she looked up at our small group. Her gaze was penetrating.

“Nephi and his brothers had been given a difficult task,” she pointed out. “It took several tries, none of which was easy. But it was worth persistent effort. As a result of having the scriptures, Nephi would prevent his family from ‘dwindl[ing] and perish[ing] in unbelief’ (1 Nephi 4:13).

“There will be ‘plates’ in your own lives,” she continued. “Maybe you will have to demonstrate persistence in obtaining your education. Perhaps you will be called on to exhibit courage when you’re dating. Whatever the sacrifices, the roadblocks, the setbacks, the heartbreaks—whatever it takes to preserve your future family and keep them from dwindling in unbelief—go back and get the plates.”

It was a nice parallel, I thought. I filed it away in my memory for later recollection. At that moment I didn’t feel that my life had many roadblocks. I had finished school, I was enjoying my job, and I had been dating a great guy—a longtime friend with whom things had turned more serious—for about four months. I couldn’t have been happier with how things were going.

Several months later my relationship with Jake (name has been changed) had progressed a great deal. But Jake’s parents had divorced years earlier, and their separation still affected him deeply. He was afraid that if we got married, things would end for us as they had for his parents.

I told him I was willing to give him time—lots if he needed it—to sort things out in his mind and his heart. We talked about making decisions based on faith instead of fear. We discussed the role of agency and the fact that he didn’t need to assume that his parents’ path would automatically be his fate too. And we talked about the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the Savior’s ability to heal our hearts.

Our conversations seemed to help relieve his anxiety some, and our relationship continued as usual. So when he called me one Saturday afternoon to break up, it more than surprised me. He told me that he couldn’t see himself being married to me—or to anyone. He just didn’t believe in marriage anymore.

For the next hour we rehearsed what we had already discussed, but I couldn’t persuade him. He whispered, “I’m so sorry,” and he hung up the phone. I sat silently on my bed, tears running down my face, absolutely stunned.

A while later my roommate knocked on the bedroom door. “Are you coming to stake conference?” she asked. I didn’t feel much like going anywhere or doing anything, but I put on a dress and got in her car.

When we arrived the first person I saw was the woman who had given that family home evening lesson months





earlier. Neither of us said anything, but our eyes met, and in my mind, I heard a voice call my name and say, “Go back and get the plates.”

Somehow I knew all that the prompting implied. It wasn’t just about an ancient prophet returning to get a sacred record. It was also about me. It meant that even though Jake didn’t believe in marriage, I still could. I could hope for it and pray for it and work for it—not in a wishful, wistful way but in a believing, active, prepare-myself-daily-because-this-is-God’s-plan-for-His-children kind of way. It didn’t mean that I had to go back to Jake and be with him until I “wore him down” on the idea of marriage, and it also didn’t mean I had to start dating someone new right away. It was OK for me to have a time to grieve and heal.

But during that time I could avoid wallowing in self-pity. I could resist the temptation

The prompting to “go back and get the plates” wasn’t just about Nephi returning to get a sacred record. It was also about me.

to be snide about Jake—or men in general. I could seek friends who believed in marriage and looked forward to it. And I could, like Nephi, trust in a loving Heavenly Father who gives no commandment—whether it’s obtaining ancient scriptural records or marrying and creating families—without preparing a way for us to accomplish it.

I’m still in the “accomplishing”—not the “accomplished”—stage. I’m not yet married, but I feel grateful for the good dating experiences I’ve had—experiences made richer by an improved understanding of the role persistence plays in righteous goals.

I also feel comforted by and confident in knowing what Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about



Nephi's pattern of perseverance.

He said:

"After two unsuccessful attempts, Nephi remained confident. He crept into the city toward the house of Laban without all the answers. He observed, 'I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do,' significantly adding, '*Nevertheless I went forth.*' (1 Ne. 4:6–7; italics added.)

"Nephi was willing to try time and again, using his best efforts. He expressed faith that he would be helped. He refused to be discouraged. But because he acted, had confidence in the Lord, was obedient, and properly used his agency, he received guidance. He was inspired step after step to success, and in his mother's words was 'given . . . *power* [to] accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded.' (1 Ne. 5:8; italics added.)"¹

This principle of persistence is not limited to the dating realm, of course. It also applies to those who are chronically ill and aren't sure they can cheerfully face another pain-filled day; to a couple who are striving to work through challenges in their marriage; to parents who pray for years for a child who has gone astray; to a teenager who faces antagonism at school because of her beliefs; to missionaries who have worked for days without teaching a lesson. In some way all of us have been commanded to go back and get the plates.

And like Nephi, we can. With courage, persistence, and faith, we can accomplish *all* things that the Lord has commanded us. ■

NOTE

1. Richard G. Scott, "Learning to Recognize Answers to Prayer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 32.



NEVER GIVE UP

Persistence is a positive, active characteristic. It is not idly, passively waiting and hoping for some good thing to happen. It gives us hope by helping us realize that the righteous suffer no failure except in giving up and no longer trying."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008)
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,
"Never Give Up,"