



By Elder
Anthony D. Perkins
Of the Seventy

GO FORTH IN Faith

You young adults are now living in what has been called “the Decade of Decision.” You are making many of the most important choices of your life, such as “going to the temple, serving a mission, getting an education, selecting an occupation, and choosing a companion and being sealed for time and for all eternity in the holy temple.”¹

I speak particularly to those who are struggling with one or more of these important decisions—some perhaps almost paralyzed from fear of making the wrong decision or needing reinforcement to remain confident in a decision made previously.

Four lessons of inspired decision making by Nephi, if applied, can reduce your fears and increase your confidence to move forward.

1. Obey the Commandments

The last verse of Nephi’s sacred record encapsulates his life: “For thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey” (2 Nephi 33:15).

Nephi’s faith in and love for the Savior is exemplified in his obedience to God’s commandments. He prayed (see 1 Nephi 2:16). He read the scriptures (see 1 Nephi 22:1). He sought and followed direction from a living prophet (see 1 Nephi 16:23–24). Such obedience permitted the Holy Ghost to powerfully accompany Nephi throughout his life and yielded ongoing personal revelation.

You too must stay close to the Lord by keeping God’s commandments. I testify that consistent obedience to small things such as reading the scriptures, praying daily, attending Church meetings, heeding the counsel

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of living prophets, and serving others will qualify you for the Spirit—and the revelation it brings.

Perfection is not a prerequisite to personal revelation. The prerequisite is daily repentance (see Romans 3:23). If your repentance is sincere



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and thorough (see D&C 58:42–43), the cleansing power of the Atonement will bring the Spirit to guide you in the weighty decisions of life.

2. Move Forward in Faith

Put yourself in Nephi's sandals. Your father tells you the Lord has commanded your family to leave your wealth and depart for the wilderness. Wouldn't you like to know about your journey and destination?

I suppose Nephi would have been thrilled had the Lord clearly revealed his future. But that is not how God worked with Nephi, and it is not how He will work with you.

As Nephi's family traveled through the wilderness, instructions came to him only "from time to time" (1 Nephi 16:29; 18:1). Viewing his life's journey with certainty up front would not have provided him the soul-stretching and faith-forming experiences that helped him become a more Christlike man.

If you are waiting for God to reveal what academic major to pursue,

whom to marry, what job to accept, where to live, whether to go to graduate school, and how many children to bear, you will likely never leave your apartment. I testify that personal revelation will come only "from time to time."

Our Heavenly Father wants us to grow, and that includes developing our ability to weigh facts, render judgments, and make decisions. But He also invites us to bring our decisions to Him in prayer (see D&C 9:7–9). Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that answers to our prayers come "in one of *three* ways."²

Confirming Assurance

"First," Elder Scott said, "you can feel the peace, comfort, and assurance that confirm that your decision is right."³ My wife, Christy, and I have found that assurance for critical life-affecting decisions can be communicated through the scriptures, often after temple worship.

For example, after much pondering and praying, we decided to abandon our new dream home in Texas, accept a job transfer, and move with six young children to Beijing, China. But we desperately desired spiritual confirmation for such a momentous move. Divine assurance did come to us—in the temple—as we read these words in the Doctrine and Covenants: "It is my will that you should . . . tarry not many days in this place; . . . think

TO REDUCE FEARS AND INCREASE CONFIDENCE

1. Obey the commandments.
2. Move forward in faith.
3. Live in the present.
4. Draw on the strength of others.





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procrastinate any longer and must act. I have learned that, as Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “we will get promptings of the Spirit when we have done everything we can, when we are out in the sun working rather than sitting back in the shade praying for direction on the first step to take.”⁶

As with Nephi, the Spirit will in due time confirm or warn of your chosen path.

3. Live in the Present

Nephi’s commitment on the journey to the promised land stands in stark contrast to that of his brothers Laman and Lemuel. They made the decision to go, but their hearts never left Jerusalem. Nephi was fixing his broken bow to hunt for food and mining ore to build a ship while his brothers seem to have been lounging in a tent.

Today the world has many Lamans and Lemuels. But the Lord needs committed men and women like Nephi. You will experience greater progress in life when you wholly commit to your decisions and strive to excel in your current circumstances even while you have an eye open to the future.

Nephi exemplifies the wise counsel of President Thomas S. Monson: “Daydreaming of the past and longing for the future may provide comfort but will not take the place of living in the present. This is the day of our opportunity, and we must grasp it.”⁷

not of thy property. Go unto the eastern lands” (D&C 66:5–7).

The voice of Jesus Christ in the scriptures, accompanied by powerful feelings from the Holy Ghost, confirmed that our decision to move to China was right.

Unsettled Feeling

The second way Heavenly Father answers prayers is through an “unsettled feeling, the stupor of thought, indicating that your choice is wrong.”⁴

After my mission to Taiwan, I thought international law would be a good career choice. As Christy and I considered that possible future, we understood that five more years of expensive education lay ahead.

The U.S. economy was in a deep recession and our funds were limited, so we reasoned that joining the Air Force ROTC would be a wise choice to pay for my schooling. But as I took the required tests and filled out the paperwork, we just could not get comfortable making that commitment. No stupor of thought or dark feelings

came—only an absence of peace.

That seemingly illogical financial decision was inspired, in part, because I would have been a horrible lawyer!

Divine Trust

God answers prayers a third way: no response. “When you are living worthily and your choice is consistent with the Savior’s teachings and you need to act,” Elder Scott said, “proceed with trust.”⁵

Nephi’s final attempt to obtain the brass plates illustrates how we should proceed with divine trust. He recorded:

“I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do.

“Nevertheless I went forth”
(1 Nephi 4:6–7).

Moments will arrive during your decade of decision when you cannot

4. Draw on the Strength of Others

Even after we have sought the Spirit, moved forward with our decision, and are wholly committed to it, doubts may still arise and cause us to question our decision. In such circumstances a trusted family member or friend can provide counsel and strength to stay the course. I suggest that along his journey, Nephi's bride became his trusted anchor.

An appreciation for Nephi's wife came to me while visiting the Church History Museum. I was transfixed by a



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painting there of Nephi lashed to the mast of a ship, soaked to the skin in a driving storm.⁸

At Nephi's side were his wife and one of his children. She was experiencing the same storm and challenges as Nephi, but her eyes were defiant and her strong arms were protectively wrapped around his shoulders. In that moment I realized that I too was blessed to have a loyal spouse offering strength in my times of trial. I hoped that I was a similar strength to her.

Brethren, preserving and enhancing the spiritual strength you developed (or will yet develop) as a missionary or in other righteous service is your best asset in becoming a desirable husband and father. Sisters, spiritual sensitivity, faith, and courage to follow Jesus Christ are

among your best qualities as a wife and mother.

I invite you to become the type of person your current or future spouse can draw on for wise counsel and strength. A virtuous man and a worthy woman, sealed for time and all eternity in the temple, can do difficult things as equal partners.

I promise that if you will apply the lessons learned from Nephi and modern prophets about making decisions, you will be led along with personal revelation "from time to time." As you progress through your decade of decision, may you, as did Nephi, have the faith to say:

"I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do.

"Nevertheless I went forth"
(1 Nephi 4:6–7). ■

From a devotional address, "Nevertheless I Went Forth," given at Brigham Young University on Feb. 4, 2014. For the full address, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, "To the Aaronic Priesthood: Preparing for the Decade of Decision," *Ensign*, May 2007, 48.
2. Richard G. Scott, "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," *Ensign*, May 2007, 10; emphasis in original.
3. Richard G. Scott, "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," 10.
4. Richard G. Scott, "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," 10.
5. Richard G. Scott, "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," 10.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, "In His Own Time, in His Own Way," *Ensign*, Aug. 2013, 24.
7. Thomas S. Monson, "In Search of Treasure," *Ensign*, May 2003, 20.
8. See *Helpmeet*, by K. Sean Sullivan, in "The Book of Mormon: A Worldwide View," *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, 39.