



By Elder
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MAKE YOURS A GREAT LIFE

Your future is not determined by the conditions around you. It is determined by your faith, your choices, and your efforts.

The world today seems to be on an economic roller coaster. We see businesses and governments trying to stabilize the situation. There is conflict and war in the world. Many are abandoning morals and eternal truths in favor of the deceptions of the adversary. More and more, we see evil being called good and good evil (see Isaiah 5:20). These are challenging times.

The Example of Faithful Parents

However, there have *always* been challenging times. My parents grew up during the Great Depression. They didn't have much in the way of worldly goods, but they had the gospel of Jesus Christ, their bodies and their minds, and a bright future.

When my father received his mission call, Europe was engaged in war, and about a week after his call came in late 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked. He left for his mission in early 1942. By the time he returned, the war had escalated to a world war that many thought would be the end of civilization, one in which

about 22–25 million military personnel and about 32–49 million civilians were killed. In addition, nearly 6 million Jews perished in the Holocaust. The amount of property damage is impossible to accurately estimate, but the earth still bears physical scars from Europe to the islands of the Pacific, even though the war ended more than 60 years ago.

Can you imagine what my father thought about his future as the whole world seemed to be spiraling downward? I don't know what his exact thoughts were, but I do know what his actions were. He joined the military on a track that would train him as a dentist, and he continued his education.

My mother came from poor immigrant parents but was able to finish college during wartime, when the ratio of women to men on campuses was skewed since so many of the young men were at war. She went on to raise eight children and lived a faithful life.

I am grateful that my parents pushed forward with faith during challenging times. Their actions were



instrumental in their personal development, and our family was blessed because of the type of people my parents became.

Historical Accounts of Faith in Challenging Times

There are many historical figures with whom we are all familiar who went forward with faith in challenging times. One such person lived in a country occupied by the Romans. She was from humble beginnings and probably wondered about her future. Her espoused husband couldn't find a decent place for her to give birth to her son, and later, because people wanted to kill her baby, the young family had to flee to another country. It seems like such a difficult way to start out in life, yet Mary went forward and helped raise the Savior of the world. Most people who looked at her early life might have thought she didn't have much of a future, but because of her faith and willingness to do the right things, she was truly "blessed . . . among women" (Luke 1:42).

Moroni grew up in a time when his society was crumbling. (See Mormon 1–8; Moroni 1, 9.) The people rejected God and were on their way to destruction. It was a time of slippery

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riches, great violence, sexual immorality, and war. Moroni's father, Mormon, almost single-handedly staved off the destruction of his people for a time. Both Mormon and Moroni lived in extremely difficult times but fulfilled their destinies.

Joseph Smith did not start out in a promising position for success as far as the world was concerned. His family was poor. As a young man he faced tremendous opposition, which continued throughout his life. Yet he persevered and overcame the obstacles in his path.

None of these people allowed the challenges they faced or the conditions of their world to determine the trajectory of their lives. They went forward with faith, and through the blessings of the Lord, they all became what they were meant to become.

A Bright Future for You

Your future is not determined by the conditions around you. It is determined by your faith, your choices, and your efforts. Yes, you live in challenging times, but so did Mary, Moroni, and Joseph Smith. You don't have to be carried along in the current of the times. The Lord can and will help you set your own course. The challenges you face will serve to strengthen you as you move forward with your life. Each of you has a bright future, a future you cannot now fully comprehend.

How will you face your challenges? Some people complain and blame circumstances or other people for their problems. They won't let go of bad feelings. They portray themselves as victims and become bitter. They seem to spend so much time and energy justifying themselves and pushing off responsibility to others that there is no energy left to go forward with their lives.

Others seem to live in the past and dwell on how things used to be. They are so unwilling to leave the past that they don't turn around to face a future that would be bright if they approached it properly.

Some people dream about the future but don't do much to move into it with power. They don't realize that what they do—or don't do—now will profoundly affect their future.

People who go to work with faith, knowing the Lord will bless them if they do what's right, are the ones with a bright future. The title of the last conference address given by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve, (1917–2008) explained how these people handle challenges: "Come What May, and Love It." Elder Wirthlin said: "If we approach adversities wisely, our hardest times can be times of greatest growth, which in turn can lead toward times of greatest happiness."¹

Your individual future is either bright or cloudy, depending on you.

I guarantee that you will face challenges. That is part of mortality. It is expected. It is OK. In fact, it is necessary. But remember, your future is bright.

In 1993, when President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995) was president of the Quorum of the Twelve, he told young adults:

"I am here tonight to tell you that despair, doom, and discouragement are not an acceptable view of life for a Latter-day Saint. However high on the charts they are on the hit parade of contemporary news, we must not walk on our lower lip every time a few difficult moments happen to confront us. . . .

"Knowing what we know, and living as we are supposed to live, we really have no place, no excuse, for pessimism and despair.

"In my lifetime I have seen two world wars. . . . I have worked my way through the Depression and managed to go to law school while starting a young family at the same time. I have seen stock markets and world economics go crazy, and I have seen a

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few despots and tyrants go crazy, all of which causes quite a bit of trouble around the world in the process.

"So I am frank to say tonight that I hope you won't believe all the world's difficulties have been wedged into your decade, or that things have never been worse than they are for you personally, or that they will never get better."²

There are no better days than these days, because "these are [your] days" (Helaman 7:9). You are here on earth at this time for a reason. You have what it takes. You have skills, knowledge, and natural talents given to you from God. If you live righteously, you will have access to the inspiration and strength you will need to triumph over any challenge you face. You will have the protection of a worthy life; guidance

from the Lord through the Holy Ghost and prophets, seers, and revelators; and the power of sacred promises that are yours because you keep your covenants.

Take these things that are yours and have a great life!

The reason I am so confident about your ability to find a bright future in the midst of a challenging world isn't because

I know each of you individually, but because I know that the Lord lives and loves us. He is the real reason each of us has a bright future. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (see Philippians 4:13). Because we are children of our Heavenly Father and because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I know our futures are bright. ■

Adapted from a commencement address given at LDS Business College on April 9, 2009.

NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Come What May, and Love It," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 26.
2. Howard W. Hunter, "An Anchor to the Souls of Men," CES Fireside for Young Adults, Feb. 7, 1993.

