

The Courage

By Christian Hägglund

When I returned home to Sweden after my mission, I wrestled for a long time with the next step in my life—temple marriage. The Spirit reaffirmed that I needed to start my family to become the person I needed to become. I focused so much on how this was the most important decision of my life, that even though I felt that I had found the eternal companion for me, and that the Lord approved of my choice, my faith wavered. My girlfriend, Evelina, and I chose a time for our temple sealing, booked our honeymoon, and bought engagement rings before actually becoming engaged—all because of my fear of committing to marriage. I wanted Heavenly Father to command me to marry Evelina because I feared being accountable for the decision in case our marriage ended. Fear and misguided prayers left me paralyzed with my important decision still looming.



I learned to use my agency to act instead of being acted upon when I made the most important decision of my life.

Agency—the Lord’s Way

The promptings of the Holy Ghost eventually made the difference when I turned to Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–29: “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is [slothful]. . . .

“ . . . Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. . . .

“But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.”

As I pondered these verses, I gained an understanding of the role of agency in our Heavenly Father’s plan, which changed my thinking and gave me courage to move forward. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of

to Marry

the Twelve Apostles taught that if we received inspired guidance without personal effort, we would miss out on “essential personal growth” that comes “as [we] struggle to learn how to be led by the Spirit.”¹

Power to Move Forward

I then resolved to exercise my faith and make a decision, and the Lord blessed me with confidence in my ability to decide. I realized that I should “be anxiously engaged . . . and do many things of [my] own free will”—including getting engaged. The Lord encourages us to use our power as agents to govern ourselves. The use of this power is a central feature in our lives.

I believe that the Lord is more eager to see us exercise our agency than to see us always make perfect decisions. He has, however, given us the necessary tools to make good decisions, especially when it comes to deciding whom to marry. As President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught, “Emotions must



not wholly determine decisions, but the mind and the heart, strengthened by fasting and prayer and serious consideration, will give one a maximum chance of marital happiness. It brings with it sacrifice, sharing, and a demand for great selflessness.”²

We even have scriptural instruction on how to receive spiritual confirmations: “You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within

you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

“But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought” (D&C 9:8–9). Not all of us, however, will experience a burning in our bosom in response to the Lord’s spiritual confirmations. Each of us must learn to recognize our own particular way of receiving these confirmations.³ By following this pattern, we will gain faith in our ability to make choices.

Heavenly Father knew the needs of my heart, soul, and mind. He gave me these truths, which made all the difference. Evelina and I were married. We have now enjoyed several years of happy family life, and we have three beautiful children. I am so grateful to the Lord for my testimony of agency and its role in making life’s most important decisions. ■

The author lives in Stockholm, Sweden.

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 7.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 40.
3. See also Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.