



By Elder
Weatherford T.
Clayton
Of the Seventy

Be Strong

AND OF A GOOD COURAGE

The promise God gave to Joshua so long ago is also a promise to us today: He will neither fail us nor forsake us.

Before Moses was translated, he set Joshua apart as the new prophet of the children of Israel. The scriptures say that Joshua “was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him” (Deuteronomy 34:9).

God’s first command to Joshua was to obtain the land promised to the children of Israel. God promised Joshua that no one would be able to stand before him and that God would neither “fail [him], nor forsake [him]” (Joshua 1:5). So that He could bless Joshua, God commanded him to “be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:6). This same commandment applies to us today.

God’s Promises to Us Today

God still sends us into new lands and commands us to learn new things and to change. When we do these things, the promise He gave to Joshua so long ago is also His promise to us: He will neither fail us nor forsake us. In our day, the Savior has promised, “He that is faithful *shall be made strong* in every place; and I, the Lord, will go with you” (Doctrine and Covenants 66:8; emphasis added).

Jesus Christ promises that He will make the faithful become strong and enable the weak (the humble and obedient) to confound the wise (see Doctrine and Covenants 133:57–58) and that He will go with us, helping us to bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom (see Doctrine and Covenants 52:17). What magnificent promises!



Five Milestones That Show Strength

Through the writings of His prophets, the Lord identifies milestones we can achieve if we are strong and courageous. Here are five important ones:

1 OBTAIN A PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND BE BAPTIZED AND CONFIRMED

Nephi is a perfect example of how to achieve this milestone. His father, Lehi, had just finished teaching the gospel to Nephi's rebellious older brothers, Laman and Lemuel, with such spiritual power that they were not able to speak against him. Nephi was so moved by what his father taught that he wanted to know for himself that it was true.

So, Nephi prayed and received an answer: "Behold [the Lord] did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father" (1 Nephi 2:16).

Nephi didn't rebel. He felt the Spirit testify that what his father had said was true. He prayed and received an answer that it was true! This is the same thing that can happen to us when we pray after feeling the Spirit. It can happen to investigators while missionaries are teaching. It can happen as parents teach children. It can happen as Church leaders testify during general conference. God will confirm their words to us.

Once we are convinced of the truth, the Savior invites us to be baptized. He says, "Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do" (2 Nephi 31:12). Heavenly Father confirms this by inviting, "Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son" (2 Nephi 31:11). Being baptized is the natural next step for everyone who repents.

2 FULLY SHARE IN THE BLESSINGS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Each of us needs to share in the priesthood. For young women as well as young men, that means learning what the priesthood is and how it can bless your life. All the ordinances that make eternal life possible come through the priesthood. Without it we cannot receive the temple endowment or be sealed as couples or families.

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "Priesthood keys direct women as well as



men, and priesthood ordinances and priesthood authority pertain to women as well as men.”¹

When someone receives the priesthood, whether it is Aaronic or Melchizedek, it is a major milestone not only for the individual but also for the family. The presence of the priesthood in the home blesses not only the priesthood holder but also each family member. Every member in the Church is, in fact, blessed by and through the priesthood.

3 OBTAIN AND HONOR TEMPLE BLESSINGS

Joseph Smith prayed that “thy servants may go forth from [the temple] armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them; . . . [that] they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:22–23).

Of course, this blessing applies to all Latter-day Saints who worthily ascend to the house of the Lord. They may be young men and women being baptized and confirmed for the dead, converts going to the temple for the first time, couples being married, families being sealed, missionaries preparing to serve, or faithful Saints who have made temple attendance a regular

part of their worship for years. All may go forth armed with power, taking upon them the name of Christ, with glory about them, able to bear testimony of great and glorious tidings.

In addition to being a site of sacred learning, the temple is a place of covenants, promises that are meant to be kept. That is why we take the sacrament—to remember the Savior and renew our covenants to follow Him. That is why we return to the house of the Lord as often as we are able. As we do so we find strength in the Lord.

4 SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH JOY

The Lord said we must “in mildness and in meekness” reach out to our neighbors (Doctrine and Covenants 38:41.) President Oaks reminded us that *all* Christians are commanded to share the gospel.²

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Missionary work is not just one of the 88 keys on a piano that is occasionally played; it is a major chord in a compelling melody that needs to be played continuously throughout our lives if we are to remain in harmony with our commitment to Christianity and the gospel of Jesus Christ.”³

Of course, full-time missionary service also provides a marvelous opportunity to share the gospel. It is a priesthood responsibility for young men who are physically and emotionally able to serve, and an opportunity for young women who desire to serve. Senior sisters and couples are blessed as they serve, and service and volunteer opportunities bless many, including those who, for one reason or another, may not be able to serve full-time.

Sharing the gospel requires us to be strong and of a good courage. However, the blessings we receive from heeding Christ’s call to “teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19) far exceed any sacrifice we may make.

5 BE SEALED IN THE TEMPLE AND ENJOY THE BLESSINGS OF FAMILY LIFE

“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”⁴

One of the greatest joys of this life comes from falling in

love and marrying a worthy companion in the temple. I know, because it happened to me! In October 1975, I first saw a certain beautiful young woman. From the beginning, she stole my heart. We began to court, and it was a magical, joyful time. On March 16, 1976, we were married and sealed together in the Salt Lake Temple, surrounded by family and friends. We knew the love we felt could only grow greater as we kept the promises we made to the Lord and to each other.

Especially in today’s world, strength and courage are required to honor the covenants of an eternal marriage. My wife and I have chosen to be “fiercely loyal” to each other.⁵ I encourage you to do the same. I promise you that being loyal, strong, and of a good courage in marriage has brought blessings far beyond the wildest hopes I had in 1976. It is worth it! Regardless of your circumstances, keep the goal of eternal marriage in your heart.

My wife and I were blessed to have four daughters and a son. They have been the joy of our lives. As we watched them take their first steps, throw their first ball, play their first soccer match, be baptized, go on their first date, advance in Young Women or obtain the priesthood, receive their endowment, go on a mission, fall in love, be sealed to worthy companions in the temple, and have their own families, the joys and blessings of our own marriage have increased. As parents, we have had to “be strong and of a good courage” and the Lord has blessed us along each step of our path.

Press Forward

May these milestones help you map your future. Some may be fulfilled sooner than others, but whether now or later, Heavenly Father wants you to have all the blessings that come from them. As you press forward, choose to “be strong and of a good courage.” The Lord’s promise to Joshua will be yours: “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Joshua 1:5). ■

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 49.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Sharing the Restored Gospel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 57.
3. Quentin L. Cook, in Dallin H. Oaks, “Sharing the Restored Gospel,” 58.
4. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
5. See L. Whitney Clayton, “Marriage: Watch and Learn,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 84.