

How to **FACE** UNCERTAINTY *with* **FAITH**

By Megan Armknecht

As young adults, it is easy to worry about the future. From our education and career choices to our decisions about dating, marriage, and missions, we are making crucial choices that will affect the rest of our lives. With so much at stake, we “counsel with the Lord in all [our] doings” (Alma 37:37). We study things out and use the resources available to us, including scriptures, prayer, parents, trusted mentors and priesthood leaders, and patriarchal blessings.

But what do we do when there *is* no clear-cut answer and heaven seems silent?

When we are unsure, it is easy to let fear paralyze us. Sometimes we even *choose* not to make a decision because we think we are going to mess up.

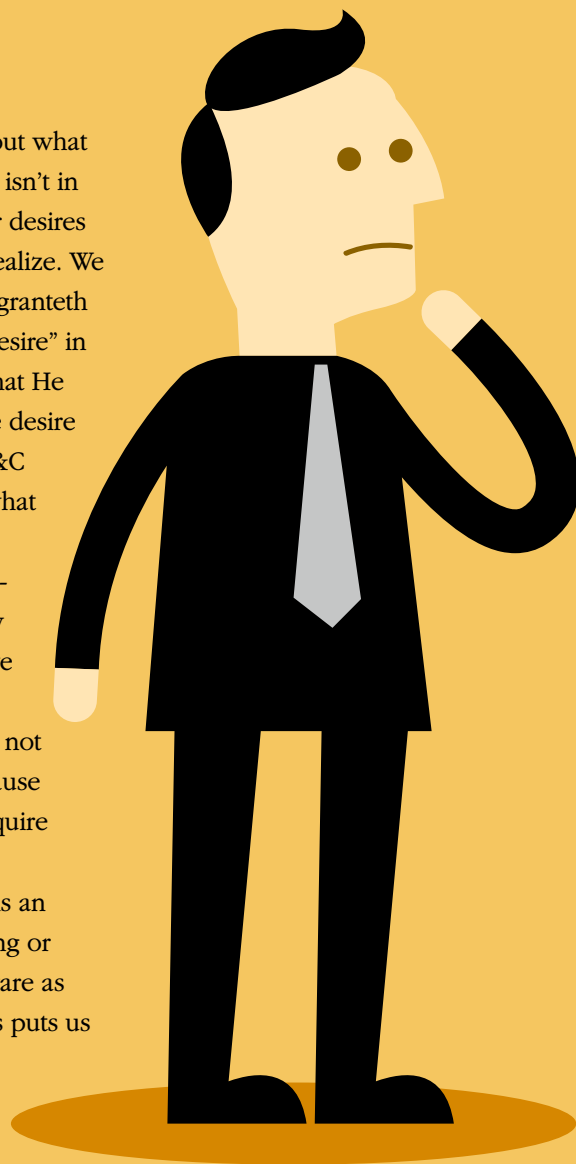
Don't be afraid of uncertainty. Here are three things you can do when you don't know what else to do: Educate your desires, move forward with faith, and “glory in the mystery” of your future.

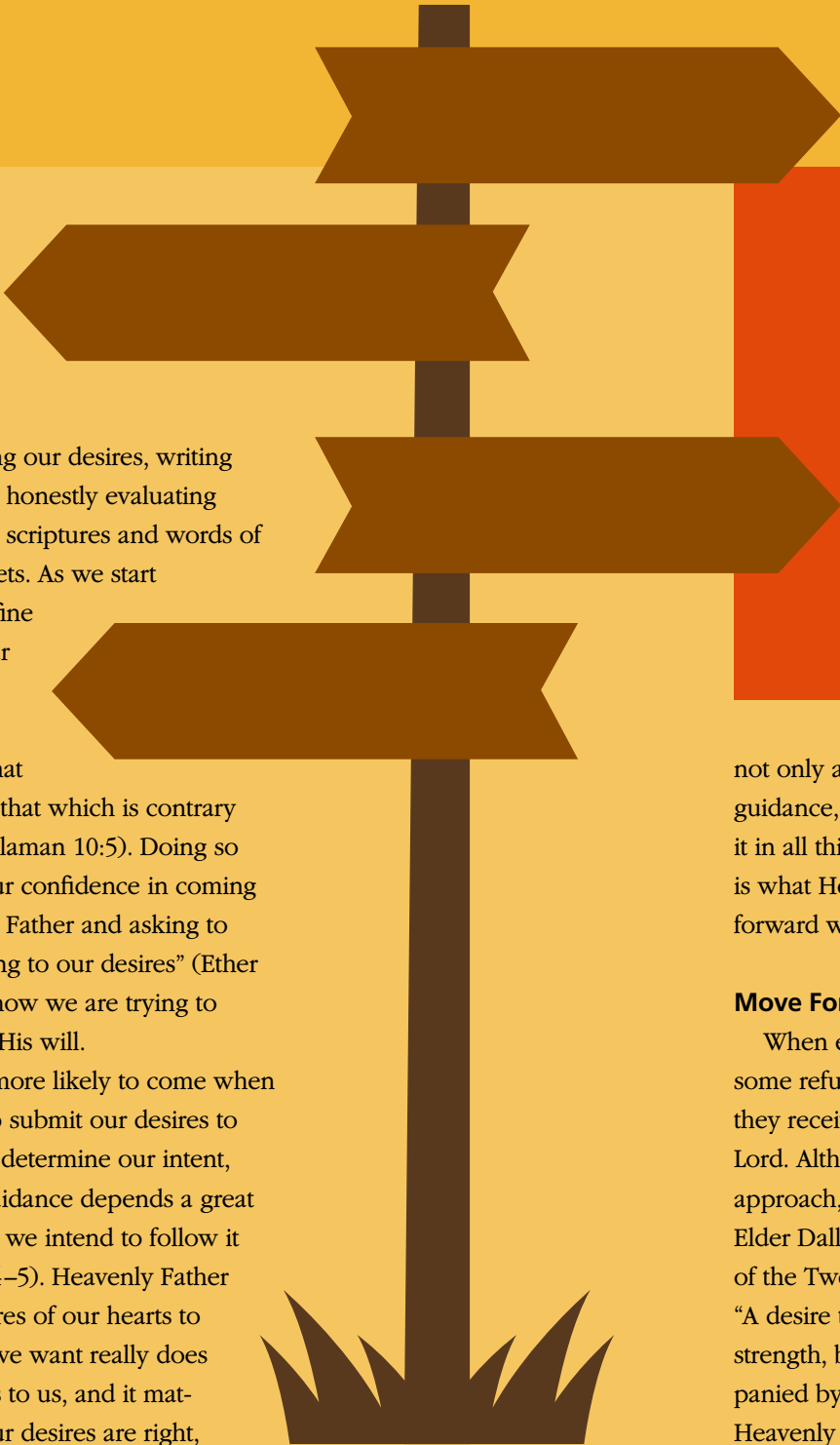
Educate Your Desires

When we are uncertain about what to do, sometimes the problem isn't in our head; it's in our heart. Our desires are more important than we realize. We are taught not only that God “granteth unto men according to their desire” in this life (Alma 29:4) but also that He will judge us “according to the desire of [our] hearts” in the next (D&C 137:9). That's a lot riding on what we want.

There are many things competing for our desires. We may not know what we want, or we may be afraid of wanting the wrong thing. At times we may not even want the right thing because we're afraid of what it may require of us.

Understanding our desires is an important step toward changing or educating them. Being self-aware as to the desires that influence us puts us in a position to control them, rather than the other way around. This process can





include vocalizing our desires, writing them down, and honestly evaluating them against the scriptures and words of the living prophets. As we start to define and refine the desires of our hearts, we give Heavenly Father reason to trust that we will “not ask that which is contrary to [His] will” (Helaman 10:5). Doing so also increases our confidence in coming before Heavenly Father and asking to “receive according to our desires” (Ether 3:2), since we know we are trying to align them with His will.

Answers are more likely to come when we are willing to submit our desires to His. Our desires determine our intent, and receiving guidance depends a great deal on whether we intend to follow it (see Moroni 10:4–5). Heavenly Father can use the desires of our hearts to guide us. What we want really does matter. It matters to us, and it matters to Him. If our desires are right,

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not only are we more likely to receive guidance, but we’re less likely to need it in all things, because what we want is what He wants, and we can move forward with faith.

Move Forward with Faith

When encountering uncertainty, some refuse to make a decision until they receive clear direction from the Lord. Although there is merit in this approach, there is also danger. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled: “A desire to be led by the Lord is a strength, but it needs to be accompanied by an understanding that our Heavenly Father leaves many decisions

for our personal choices. . . . Persons who try to shift all decision making to the Lord and plead for revelation in every choice will soon find circumstances in which they pray for guidance and don't receive it."¹

God will never take away our agency. He reminds us:

"It is not meet that I should command in all things. . . .

"Verily I say, 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" (D&C 58:26–28).

Did you catch that? *The power is in us*. This power, agency, enables us to hope, dream, and act as free agents. Of course we should make sure we are keeping the commandments and seeking our Heavenly Father's will. But we also need to be agents of choice. We need to act for ourselves and do "many things" of our own free will. God doesn't want us to be "compelled in all things" (verse 26), even the big things. For how would we grow?

If we are to become like our Heavenly Parents, then we must learn to act instead of passively being acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26). When we face uncertainty, we can choose to move forward and act in faith. Elder



Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles promised, "When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision."²

"Glory in the Mystery"

When I was choosing where I would go to graduate school, I was faced with many wonderful options. As I weighed the choices in my mind and prayed for direction, I had the

overwhelming sense that this decision was up to me; the Lord would ratify any decision I made in this situation.

Instead of comforting me, this answer terrified me. I was nervous that I was going to make the wrong decision. I didn't trust myself.

I went to a trusted mentor for help. As we talked, I laid out all of the factors: pros, cons, fears, hopes, and so on. I had thought (and worried) about this a lot, and my mentor could tell.

As I finished talking, he looked me straight in the eye.

“Look, Megan,” he said. “You have two great options here. I don’t think you can mess this choice up. It might seem trite, but ultimately it comes down to the heart wants what the heart wants. So, what do you want?”

The directness of the question opened my understanding. I finally saw what Heavenly Father was trying to tell me in this decision-making process: I had come before Him in humility in the steps leading up to this choice, He had directed me in my desires, and He now trusted me enough to choose the next step of this path. I could choose whatever I felt was best, and He would be with me. The choice *was* mine, and that *was* liberating.

As we talked more about what I wanted, my mentor gave one last piece of advice.

“I know that these choices can be agonizing,” he said. “I’ve gone through them myself. But before you make any decision, just take an hour or two to go outside, walk around, and glory in the mystery that is your future.”

That concept has stuck with me through the years and has helped me when I have had to make other decisions. Because even though making such decisions can be agonizing, it is true freedom.

Instead of anguishing about making a wrong decision, we can look forward with hope, trust that we’re not supposed to know everything right now, and glory in the promises that God has made to us personally:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

“And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours” (D&C 78:17–18).

Enhance the Opportunity to Grow

Trust in the Lord. Live to have His Spirit, and let Him lead and guide you. But when uncertainty strikes—and

it will—take comfort in the fact that the Lord trusts you and is giving you an opportunity to learn, grow, and become more like Him.

One of the most important principles of the restored gospel is that we are not slaves of circumstance. We are free to choose—with all of the glorious responsibilities that come with that knowledge and power.

So examine your desires, replace fear with faith, and glory in the mystery of your future. The future may be uncertain, but we can be sure that our efforts to face it with faith will be for our “profit and learning” (2 Nephi 2:14). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 13.
2. Richard G. Scott, “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 10.



OTHER RESOURCES

Still nervous? Here are some other sources on decision making and dealing with uncertainty:

- Bruce C. Hafen, “On Dealing with Uncertainty,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 63–67.
- Dallin H. Oaks, “Revelation,” *New Era*, Sept. 1982, 38–46.
- Kathleen Lubeck Peterson,

“Making Major Life Decisions,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2006, 12–16.

- “Move Forward in Faith,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2013, 54–57.
- Anthony D. Perkins, “Go Forth in Faith,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2015, 16–20.
- David A. Bednar, “Being an Agent to Act” (video), [lds.org/go/bednarE617](https://www.lds.org/go/bednarE617).