

*I used to think that happiness comes after the hard part is over.
But I have learned that we can be happy while enduring.*

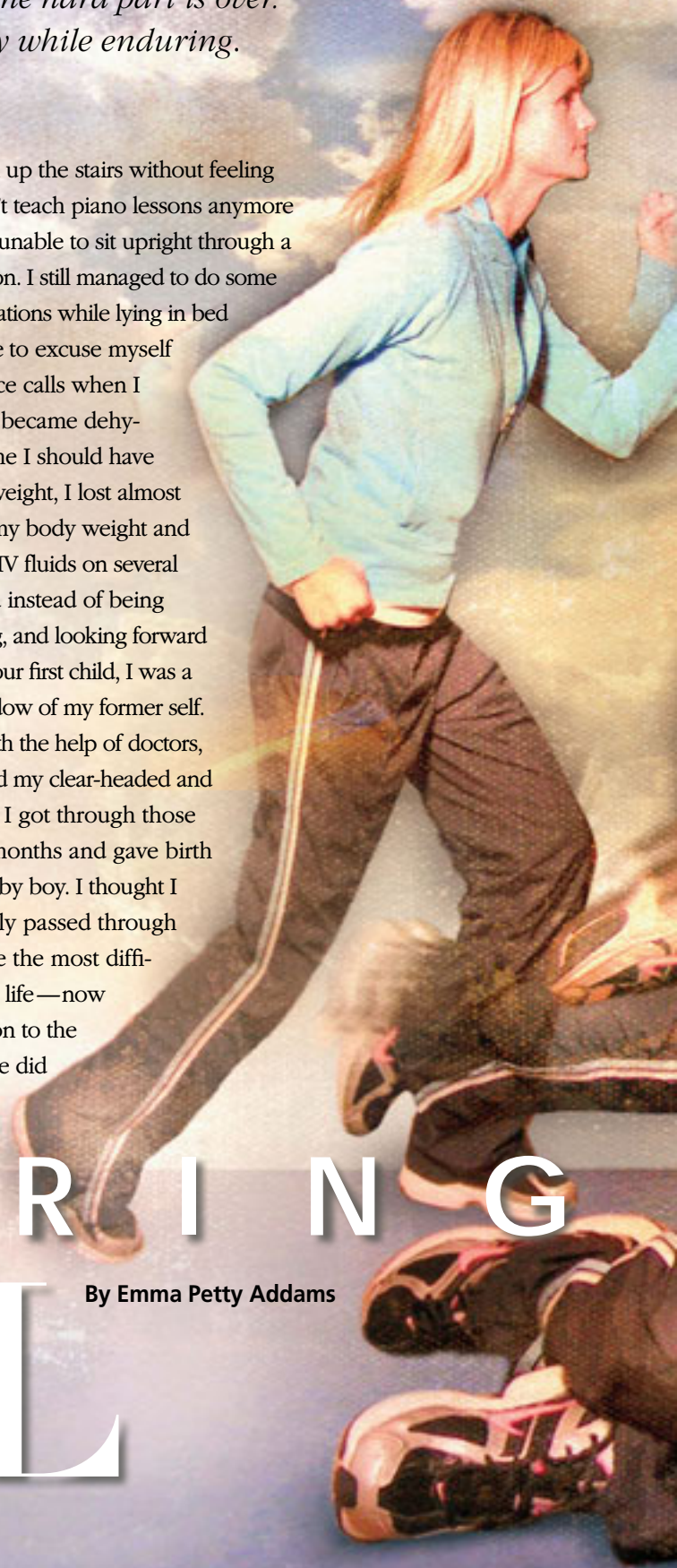
PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CARY HENRIE

As a runner, I found that endurance came naturally, both on and off the race course. I never looked at trials as adversity—just challenges to meet head-on and with great intensity. I figured I could grit my teeth and get through any physical, emotional, or other struggle. Because this method worked well for me both in running and in other areas of my life, I thought that “to endure” meant “to hang on” through something unpleasant; then, after it ended, I could move on to the good stuff and be happy.

Seven years ago, I didn’t often have to get through something unpleasant. I was newly married to my husband, Lee, who was finishing graduate school. I had a successful career as a legal negotiator. I worked entirely from home and mostly on my own schedule, and I was able to accept and refuse assignments as my time and lifestyle permitted. I also ran a 30-student piano studio out of our home. In addition, I was doing trail runs every week, mountain biking whenever I fancied, and taking yoga and kickboxing classes regularly. I was in the best health of my life.

A short time later, when I became pregnant, everything turned upside-down. I went from running half-marathons with ease to being

unable to walk up the stairs without feeling dizzy. I couldn’t teach piano lessons anymore because I was unable to sit upright through a half-hour session. I still managed to do some contract negotiations while lying in bed but would have to excuse myself from conference calls when I became sick. I became dehydrated. At a time I should have been gaining weight, I lost almost 15 percent of my body weight and had to receive IV fluids on several occasions. And instead of being happy, glowing, and looking forward to the birth of our first child, I was a depressed shadow of my former self. Fortunately, with the help of doctors, medication, and my clear-headed and kind husband, I got through those difficult nine months and gave birth to a healthy baby boy. I thought I had successfully passed through what would be the most difficult trial of my life—now I could move on to the good stuff. Little did I know.



ENDURING WELL

By Emma Petty Addams



**THE MEANING OF
THE WORD ENDURE**

Endure to the End:
To remain true to
the commandments of
God despite temptation,
opposition, and adversity
throughout life."

Preach My Gospel (2004), 70.

HAPPINESS AMID ADVERSITY



When I was young I loved playing sports, and I have many fond memories of those days. But not all of them are pleasant. I remember one day after my football team lost a tough game, I came home feeling discouraged. My mother was there. She listened to my sad story. She taught her

children to trust in themselves and each other, not blame others for their misfortunes, and give their best effort in everything they attempted.

“When we fell down, she expected us to pick ourselves up and get going again. So the advice my mother gave to me then wasn’t altogether unexpected. It has stayed with me all my life.

“ ‘Joseph,’ she said, ‘come what may, and love it.’

“I have often reflected on that counsel.

“I think she may have meant that every life has peaks and shadows and times when it seems that the birds don’t sing and bells don’t ring. Yet in spite of discouragement and adversity, those who are happiest seem to have a way of learning from difficult times, becoming stronger, wiser, and happier as a result. . . .

“How can we love days that are filled with sorrow? We can’t—at least not in the moment. I don’t think my mother was suggesting that we suppress discouragement or deny the reality of pain. I don’t think she was suggesting that we smother unpleasant truths beneath a cloak of pretended happiness. But I do believe that the way we react to adversity can be a major factor in how happy and successful we can be in life.

“If we approach adversities wisely, our hardest times can be times of greatest growth, which in turn can lead toward times of greatest happiness.”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1917–2008), “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 26.

What followed in the next few years was more challenging. Our son was colicky and restless, and he slept only in small chunks of time, even beyond his newborn days. My father, who was in his early 50s and was enjoying being a grandpa for the first time, was diagnosed with cancer and passed away much too soon. I started experiencing debilitating migraine headaches on a regular basis. Our family moved from California to New York, where I had another difficult pregnancy and felt drained as I tried to keep up with two young children in a small Manhattan apartment. But I was surviving it all with constant support and love from my husband, as well as increased respite as he took over my responsibilities during the most overwhelming times.

I knew that trials were part of this life. As President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) stated: “I have never read of the people of God in any dispensation passing through life, as the sectarian world would say, on flowery beds of ease, without opposition of any kind.”¹

As far as our difficulties were concerned, I had resolved to just “wait it out,” pushing through whatever the current challenge was and trusting that things would be so much better once it was resolved. *This can’t be real life*, I thought. I just needed to hold on, knowing this too would pass.

At the forefront of our struggles was evidence that our first child was not developing and communicating the way other children his age were. Before long, he was diagnosed with autism.

Maybe that’s when I began to realize that “enduring” adversity means more than “getting through it.” With autism, there is no such thing as “sitting tight” and letting it pass or work itself out. There is no guarantee that our son will push through to the next developmental stage on his own or that he will grow out of his difficult behaviors. These experiences as a mother of a child with special needs have vastly changed my perspective about adversity and have helped me learn—gradually—what has been the most important lesson of my life: It is not enough to have trials and to get through

them. We have to endure them *well*.

Because of what our family has experienced, we feel greater empathy for others’ struggles, whatever they may be and find ourselves reaching for a greater understanding of the Savior’s love for us. We are learning that through our active use of the Atonement, it is indeed possible to be “troubled on every side, yet not distressed; . . . perplexed, but not in despair;

“Persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:8–10).

In James 5:10–11 this lack of despair is pushed one step further: “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

“Behold, we count them *happy* which endure” (emphasis added).

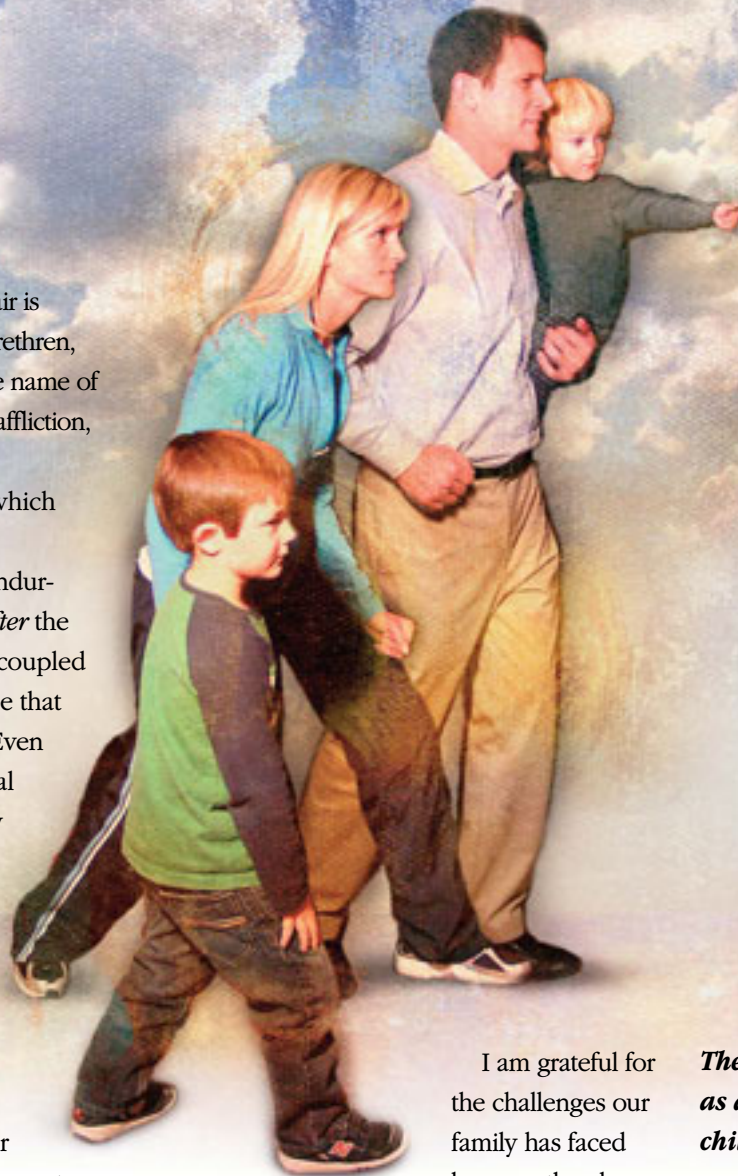
In my former understanding of endurance, happiness came at the end, *after* the hard part is over. But this scripture, coupled with my own experiences, taught me that you can be happy *while* enduring. Even though I have come to an intellectual understanding of this truth, certainly I am still learning how to put it into practice. But I know that what lies at the heart of the principle is where we put our trust; and when I prayerfully turn to the scriptures, I am patiently taught over and over again where to look.

John 6 tells the story of the Savior feeding the 5,000. The day after this great miracle, the multitude seeks Him out. He tells them: “Ye seek me, not because ye desire to keep my sayings, neither because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (John 6:26, footnote a, from Joseph Smith Translation).

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed” (John 6:27).

As He describes the “true bread from heaven” given by the Father, the crowd requests: “Lord, evermore give us this bread.

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:34–35).



I am grateful for the challenges our family has faced because they have

helped me draw closer to my Savior. I know that even in the midst of our afflictions, in the epicenter of our adversity, if we choose to eat of the bread of life, to internalize the teachings of our Savior and make daily use of His Atonement, we will find within ourselves the power to endure and to endure well. If we choose to merely endure without partaking of this gift, I know that the Lord will continue to give us experiences that will eventually help us understand this truth. As we allow the love of the Lord to abide within us through obedience to His commandments, we can have the strength to be happy and experience joy—even during times of adversity. ■

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff*, (2004), 218.

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