



*Four principles
that kept me from
putting my life
on hold.*



Savor EVERY MOMENT of Life

By Janice Southern

It was 4:00 a.m. and I sat at the nurse's station of the hospital where I worked, pondering my life and wondering what was next for me. As my mind drifted back over the years, I wondered for the hundredth time why I still wasn't married. My friends were getting married and having children, but I couldn't seem to find the right person.

When I had turned 21, I had prayed and fasted and felt that I should go on a mission. I was sure that was the reason I wasn't married. I served my mission in Montana and had a wonderful experience that I will always cherish. When I returned home, I went back to Brigham Young University and continued working on my nursing degree. Then came graduation, and still no marriage prospects.

People asked how I had made it through BYU without finding a husband—something I certainly couldn't answer! Was I too picky? Was there something more I should be doing? I had been home from my mission for almost two years. I had finished college. Now what? My life plan didn't include anything past graduation except being a wife and mother. I felt lost and alone, especially as friends around me were having their second or third child and living the life I had always imagined.

Trusting in the Lord's Plan for Me

The nurse call system rang, pulling me from my thoughts. I went in to help the patient who had called. As I sat with him and tried to help him get back to sleep, I turned my attention to the television program that was on. It was a rerun of a BYU devotional, and I recognized the

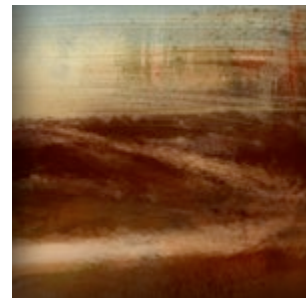
speakers as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Sister Patricia T. Holland.

As I listened, I realized the Hollands were talking about the very things that had been on my mind. As they talked of those who were still waiting for marriage, I laughed quietly to myself at their amusing counsel to not “march to an arbitrary drummer who seems to be beating a frenzied cadence to the passing years”¹ and to trust in the timing of the Lord.

But tears came to my eyes as I heard, “Life ought to be enjoyed at every stage of our experience and should not be hurried and wrenched and truncated and torn to fit an unnatural schedule which you have predetermined but which may not be the Lord's personal plan for you at all,” and “Don't wait to live. . . . We of all people ought to savor every moment.”²

At that moment the Spirit bore a powerful witness to me that my Father in Heaven knew me intimately—that He had a plan for my life and that I needed to trust in Him.

The patient soon fell asleep and I returned to my other duties, but I reflected again and again on those words and on the confirmation that the Spirit had given me. I later found a copy of that talk and marveled that I had happened to hear the part of Elder and Sister Holland's counsel that perfectly applied to me and to my situation. I know that my Father in Heaven was aware of me and my struggles at that time and wanted me to know of His love.





Four Guiding Principles

It has been many years since that experience. I have long since moved on from a young single adult ward to a family ward, and so far I'm still single. My situation isn't what I expected for my life, but Heavenly Father has shown me how "to savor every moment" of life, as the Hollands counseled, even amid my trials. Here are four principles that have helped me the most during this time:

BE OPTIMISTIC

One of the characteristics I admired most in President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) was his never-ending optimism. As I study the scriptures, I find this principle repeated over and over. I am amazed at how many times the Lord commands us to be cheerful (see, for instance, D&C 61:36; 78:18; and 123:17). I have learned to be optimistic about my future.

LOOK FOR COMPENSATORY BLESSINGS

Closely related to being optimistic is realizing how blessed we are, even when things seem to be going wrong. During a particularly difficult time in my life, when a relationship I thought might lead to marriage was ending, I found a statement Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles made: "Find the compensatory blessings in your life when, in the wisdom of the Lord, He deprives you of something you very much want. . . . You will discover compensatory blessings when you willingly accept the will of the Lord and exercise faith in Him."³ I am so much happier as I look for the many blessings that I have instead of focusing on what I do not have.

I have so much to be grateful for. My twin, who is also still single, and I have grown very close to each other and to our parents and family. We are blessed with brothers- and sisters-in-law and now have 24 nieces and nephews who bring joy to our lives and help to fill our empty arms.



FIND WAYS TO SERVE

Looking for ways to serve others helps me to focus outward instead of on my own problems. I have found that one of the most important ways I can serve is in my own family. As I serve my family and help nurture my siblings' children, I learn much that will help with my own family someday.

However, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "A man filled with the love of God, is not

content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."⁴ As important as serving my family is, I also try to serve in the Church and in my community.

We will each find different ways to serve, but however we serve, it will bless our lives and the lives of others.

HAVE FAITH IN THE LORD'S TIMING

The Lord has a perfectly tailored plan for each of us. As I turn my life over to Him and trust in His timing, it works out.

I still hope and pray and do all that I can to find a husband, but now I know and understand that "all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" (2 Nephi 2:24).

There are still moments of heartache and perplexity, but they are now only moments because the Spirit assures me that Heavenly Father knows what is best for me.

The patience and trust I have learned from waiting on the Lord for marriage have helped me in other difficult situations. I have come to know my Heavenly Father better and have learned to put my trust in Him. I have felt the comfort and unlimited compassion of my Savior and have come to more fully understand His Atonement and how it can heal the pain in my heart as well as the mistakes in my life.

As I have tried to implement these principles and stay close to the Lord, I have found great happiness. Just like that night in the hospital when the words I needed to hear were on the television, the Lord has shown me again and again that He is aware of me and my needs and that He does indeed have a plan for me. My life is rich and full. The Lord's timetable may differ from what I had in mind, but I trust that He will lead me and bring me "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



ANCHOR YOUR LIFE

"Do not rely on planning every event of your life—even every important event. Stand ready to accept the Lord's planning and the agency of others in matters that inevitably affect you. Plan, of course, but fix your planning on personal commitments that will carry you through no matter what happens. Anchor your life to eternal principles, and act upon those principles whatever the circumstances and whatever the actions of others. Then you can await the Lord's timing and be sure of the outcome in eternity."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Timing," *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 17.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. and Patricia T. Holland, "Some Things We Have Learned—Together" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 15, 1985), 2, speeches.byu.edu.
2. Jeffrey R. and Patricia T. Holland, "Some Things We Have Learned—Together," 3.
3. Richard G. Scott, "Finding Joy in Life," *Ensign*, May 1996, 25.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 426.