

The world constantly tries to throw us off balance, but by staying centered in Christ, we can trust the Lord to direct our path.

LEAN NOT

Staying Centered in Christ

By Hannah DeTavis
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I felt powerful each time I slipped on a pair of pink ballet slippers. However, I also felt keenly aware of my weaknesses that prevented me from excelling in dance—particularly my tendency to fall off balance. As I prayed to Heavenly Father for His help to “make [my] weak things become strong” (Ether 12:27) and dedicated myself to improving, I realized that I could learn a lot about spiritual discipline from the physical discipline required in ballet.

We learn in Proverbs 3:5 that we must “trust in the Lord with all [our] heart; and lean

not unto [our] own understanding.” By staying centered in Christ—and not leaning on our own wisdom—we can become the steady disciples Heavenly Father wants us to be. Here are a few lessons I learned from ballet that helped me focus on the Lord.

1. You can't lean on the testimonies of others forever

To warm up, I would balance on one leg near a barre, or a stationary rod. When my legs would tremble or I'd sway off balance, even the lightest touch to the barre would help me regain my position.

Eventually, I had to learn how to maintain balance without relying on the barre for support.

Just as I relied on the ballet barre for balance, we often rely on the testimonies of parents, friends, and leaders to steady us as we develop our own testimonies. While we are all subject to those “shaky moments,” it's up to us to strengthen our own testimony so we can stand strong for the Savior—especially if we stand alone.

Although hearing others' testimonies can strengthen us during times of difficulty, President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) taught that we can lean on the testimony of others for only so long. He said, “Eventually we must have our own strong and deeply placed foundation, or we will be unable to withstand the storms of life, which will come.”¹

2. Strengthen your spiritual muscle groups

After warm-ups, I would dance in the middle of the studio without the support of the barre. My teacher stressed the importance of strengthening different areas of the body to remain centered. I needed strong legs for dynamic turns, strong arms for structure, and a strong core for balance.

My teacher would pass between dancers and poke at our legs, arms, and stomachs to ensure that our muscles were fully engaged. If my muscles were tight, I could sustain a balanced position when she prodded me. If they weren't, I would fall off balance.

As we go through life, Satan prods our weak spots, hoping we'll tip off balance and stumble in our spiritual performance. If we develop our basic spiritual muscle groups—prayer, scripture study, service—and build our foundation on the Savior, we won't budge when Satan throws temptations and doubts in our direction (see Helaman 5:12).

3. Stay centered in Christ

A pirouette requires a dancer to perform a complete turn on one foot. Without the proper focus and technique, it's easy to feel unsteady during a series of pirouettes. But by centering my weight and focusing on, or “spotting,” a single point on the wall, I could maintain balance while avoiding dizziness.

Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President, explains that “when we *physically* lean toward one side or another, we move off center, we are out of balance, and we tip. When we *spiritually* lean to our own understanding, we lean away from our Savior.”²

There are times when we all lean to our own understanding. But even when we stumble, the Savior is always there to take us by the hand and help us finish our journey across the stage. By “spotting” Him as our focal point, we can travel gracefully along the covenant path.

One day in college, I sustained a serious knee injury during a dance class. Unfortunately, this injury inhibited my ability to continue ballet. Although I was heartbroken that I couldn't dance anymore, I was filled with gratitude for the many spiritual lessons I had learned from ballet.

Ballet was just one tool that drew me closer to the Savior. I know that as I apply the lessons I learned in ballet to my spiritual growth (developing my own testimony, strengthening basic spiritual muscles, and staying centered in Christ), the Lord can empower me to remain spiritually balanced throughout this life—which, after all, is the arena where each of us must perform as we prepare for eternity. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “How Firm a Foundation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 62.
2. Bonnie H. Cordon, “Trust in the Lord and Lean Not,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 6.