

Struggling with perfectionism helped me understand more about the Savior's Atonement.

I'm Not Perfect . . . Yet

By Joëlle Spijkerman

In 3 Nephi 12:48, Jesus teaches, “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” This scripture always hit me hard because I have struggled with perfectionism for my entire life. And as great as it is to want to do my best at everything, perfectionism can be so toxic. For a long time, whenever I made a mistake, or even when I would succeed, I never felt like I was good enough.

Asking Too Much of Myself

I've always asked a lot of myself, especially in high school. And I often fell short because I tried to accomplish so many things at once to prove that I was good enough. One year I decided to learn ballroom dancing, take music lessons, and join an ensemble. I thought I needed to do as much as I could to develop and perfect my talents. But at a certain point, I had to give everything up because it was all just too much for me to handle. I was so hard on myself. I felt like a failure, and failing was one of my biggest fears.

I know I'm not the only person who struggles with perfectionism. So many of us are trying our best every day and feeling discouraged when we don't accomplish everything perfectly. But despite our efforts, none of us will ever be completely perfect here on the earth. So how can we strive for perfection when all efforts seem so futile? Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shares an answer: “Be ye therefore perfect—eventually.”¹

Striving for perfection is a good thing, but it can become negative if we let it overwhelm us. With everything this life asks of us physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually, it's important that we don't burn ourselves out by settling for nothing less than perfection. And it's even more important to think about what Heavenly Father asks of us. He doesn't want us to be burnt out from trying to do too much.

The Lord taught in Doctrine and Covenants 10:4, “Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you

to translate; but be diligent unto the end.” We can apply that to our lives. Heavenly Father wants us to be happy, and we will be if we do what He tells us to do in the best way we can. Even if our efforts are not quite perfect yet.

Perfection Means “Complete”

The word *perfect* originally comes from the Latin word *perficere*, which breaks down into *per-* (“completely”) and *facere* (“do”). So perfection

actually means “complete.” And we cannot be complete without Jesus Christ (see Moroni 10:30). I think many of us often think we aren’t good enough. And, well, we aren’t! That is, without Christ we aren’t. As Ammon said: “I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things” (Alma 26:12).

With Jesus Christ, we can always

strive to become better, even so much that we will become perfect and complete one day because He will make up for our imperfections. “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32).

Over the years I’ve realized I didn’t fully understand and comprehend what the Savior’s Atonement means for and to me. I thought I needed to have a flawless performance here on earth and that I was left alone to figure out how to fulfill this task. But now I know that we are never alone. If we strive to focus on Jesus Christ and keep Him in our hearts and in our minds, our weaknesses will change into strengths—just like how my struggle with perfectionism is changing. I know I’m not perfect. But Christ can help us overcome any weaknesses, sins, challenges, or fears. He understands us and knows how to succor us. I hope we may all enjoy His infinite love. And realize that although we aren’t perfect now, if we strive to follow Him, we will be one day. ■



Joëlle Spijkerman, who lives in the Netherlands, enjoys laughing and smiling, and she’s often overexcited about life. She loves the gospel, kids, and music, and she is currently studying to become a primary schoolteacher. One of her goals is to share light with everyone around her.

NOTE

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 40.