

the STUTTERING

By Jane McBride Choate

(Based on a true story)

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"
(*Philippians 4:13*).

Nathaniel, would you be a narrator in the Primary program in sacrament meeting?" Sister Mitchell asked before sharing time started.

Nathaniel hesitated. He really wanted to say yes, but sometimes he stuttered, especially when he was nervous. How could he narrate the whole program?

"Maybe," he said. "But I s-s-tutter."

Sister Mitchell smiled. "I know. We'd love your help,

"Doing our best doesn't mean doing things perfectly," Mom said.



Struggle

though. You're the oldest one in Primary, and the other kids look up to you. I know you can do a great job."

"Th-th-anks." Nathaniel was glad that Sister Mitchell believed in him. Still, he didn't know if he should say yes. What if he stuttered in front of the whole ward?

Later Nathaniel and his family gathered in the living room to talk about what they'd learned in Church that day.

"How was Primary, Nathaniel?" Dad asked.

Nathaniel sighed. "Sister Mitchell asked me to be a narrator in the Primary program. I want to do it—especially since I'm l-l-leaving Primary soon. But I d-d-don't know if I can."

"Hmm," Dad said. "Are you worried you'll stutter? It'll be OK, even if you do."

Mom put her arm around him. "It's your choice," she said. "We'll pray for you."

"Thanks," Nathaniel said.

He thought about it the whole next week. By Sunday he'd made up his mind.

"I'd like to be a n-n-narrator for the Primary pr-pr-program," he told Sister Mitchell in Primary.

"That's great," Sister Mitchell said. "Thank you! That will be a big help."

For the next month, Nathaniel worked on his part. He said his lines over and over until he'd memorized them. But sometimes he still stuttered.

One afternoon he was practicing a really tricky word. "I c-c-can't d-d-do it!" he yelled in frustration.

Mom walked in and sat down on the couch next to him. "I know it's hard, but you *can* do it," she said. "Do you know the story about President Heber J. Grant learning to play baseball?"

He shook his head. What did baseball have to do with stuttering?

"When President Grant was young, he wanted to play baseball. None of the other boys wanted him on the team because he couldn't throw the ball very far," Mom said. "So he saved up his money, and he bought a ball. Then he practiced until he could throw the ball as well as anyone. Eventually he made the team."

"But playing baseball's n-n-not the same as s-s-stuttering," Nathaniel said.

"No, it isn't," Mom said. "But President Grant had a challenge just like you do, and he practiced and practiced. And you know what? He did great even though it was hard for him."

"Mom, I want to do m-m-my best, and I *have* been practicing a l-l-lot. But what if I s-s-till s-s-tutter?"

Mom smiled. "Doing our best doesn't mean doing things perfectly. When we work hard and ask Heavenly Father for help, we *are* doing our best. It's OK if you stutter, but don't let it stop you from trying. Dad and I will be proud of you no matter what."

Nathaniel kept practicing his lines every day. And he prayed for help to be brave. At the final practice for the program, he said his part and only stuttered a few times. He was ready.

The day of the program, Nathaniel said a quick prayer for help. When the program started, he felt warm inside. He knew he could do his best—stuttering or not. ♦

The author lives in Idaho, USA.



"Knowledge of and faith in the Lord empower us to hush our fears."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"Therefore They Hushed Their Fears," *Ensign*, May 2015, 47.