

Moving Forward with Hope during Unexpected Times

When we feel fear and uncertainty about moving forward in life, our hope and faith in Christ can light the way.

By Natalie Smith

None of us could have expected the worldwide impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It's as if everything in the world was put on pause, and all for an indefinite amount of time, causing uncertainty to cloud our thoughts about the future.

I returned home from my mission in Arizona, USA, just as the pandemic started spreading across the globe. During the last few weeks of my mission, I had been creating a vision for where I wanted my life to go once I returned home. I made specific plans and goals and was ready to get started! I planned to go to nursing school, to start new hobbies and find new friends, and to seize so many opportunities that come during young adulthood. I felt a sense of peace and assurance that God was guiding me and had great things in store for me after my mission.

That changed soon after I got home.

One by one, my plans were canceled because of COVID-19. I began to question and doubt the decisions and goals I had made. I chose to start looking for a job while waiting for online classes to start instead of moving to another state to begin school like I had originally planned. After a while, I felt I had lost my purpose and was wasting so much time. I was used to always having a jam-packed schedule as a missionary, and so I suddenly felt lonely, bored, and useless.

I wasn't looking forward to the future. I didn't want to face this life transition. I wanted to go back in time, to return to past friendships and places that had once made me happy. The vision and plans I had for my life just a few weeks before had disappeared, and I felt like I was paralyzed by darkness, fear, and discouragement. I didn't feel like myself at all. I had just finished the most amazing experience of serving the Lord for 18 months, but now I felt lower than I ever had in my life.

I wondered why everything was going wrong and where the Lord's promised blessings were. The reassurances I had felt in the final weeks of my mission seemed to have disappeared.

Then general conference came, and I realized how much I was lacking in one specific area of life—hope.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a talk titled “A Perfect Brightness of Hope” (April 2020 general conference), and it especially stood out to me. I realized that because of my faith in Christ, I *could* and *should* hope for better things to come. Because Christ lives and is constantly working in my life, I realized my future will be just as miracle-filled and bountifully blessed as my past has been.

Because the Savior felt and overcame everything I will ever face, I could believe, despite every reason not to believe, that things were going to get better—even if my plans were sometimes skewed.

I have come to realize that if I want to have joy, success, and fulfillment in life, I must hold on to and move forward with hope, even when facing uncertainty. It’s easy to give up and be miserable. It’s hard to bear our afflictions with patience and the confident, unwavering assurance that God is in control and things will get better. But just as President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) counseled, “May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.”¹

Trust that God is building you up even when you feel you are tumbling down. Trust that in the

end, everything will work out because “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28).

When dark clouds are around us and we feel fear and uncertainty about moving forward into these paths life takes us on, our hope and faith in Christ can light the way and enable us to take even just one small step forward. Because of Him, it is possible for us to have joy in the now even when our circumstances are not what we wanted or expected.

If you are finding yourself caught in between life transitions or things aren’t quite going the way you wanted them to, remember that Heavenly Father has a plan for you that you might not even be able to imagine. Even if He may seem silent at times, He is actively working in your life. He sees the end from the beginning. If you rely on Him and continue forward, doing the best you can with your current circumstances, your life will be infinitely better than you ever thought it could be.

Don’t give up. Keep trying even when you can’t see the results of your efforts and nothing seems to be getting better. Keep going even when things don’t go according to plan. Look for the Lord’s hand in your life and recognize His goodness. Seek the guidance of the Spirit with the intent to act upon His words. Do your best, whatever that looks like today. Keep holding on. Keep moving forward. And keep hoping that, with His guidance, things will get better. ■

NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Choices,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 86.



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