



By Elder
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Tenacity and Discipleship

One online dictionary defines *tenacity* as “persistence, perseverance, and stubborn determination.” It also states, “Tenacity is the quality displayed by someone who just won’t quit—who keeps trying until they reach their goal.”¹

We need tenacity in order to become true disciples of the Savior and to achieve the truly good goals—becoming a great missionary, completing our education, finding an eternal companion, and starting a family—that our Heavenly Father knows we need to achieve to prepare for eternity. Our ability to be tenacious in all good things will determine whether we become the sons and daughters of God that He knows we can and must become.

Today’s generation of full-time missionaries has been called “the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church” and has been compared to Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors.² Notwithstanding the remarkable attributes and tenacious faith and effort

of these young men, Helaman, their leader, states: “There were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty, who had fainted because of the loss of blood; nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the joy of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish” (Alma 57:25).

They were delivered “because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power” (Alma 57:26).

Helaman says of them: “They are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually” (Alma 57:27).

So it must be with us. In life, it is when the rains descend and the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon us and on our house that we determine whether our faith is strong and whether we put our trust

Have faith in God and His promises, and do what is right all the time, regardless of who knows.

in God continually. There simply is no test until there is adversity.

Faint Not

Some years ago my wife, Mary, and I presided over the Japan Nagoya Mission. The terms *valiant*, *courageous*, *strong*, *active*, and *true* that describe the 2,000 stripling warriors (see Alma 53:20) also describe the missionaries with whom we served. Another description of the 2,000 stripling warriors—some



fainted (see Alma 57:25)—also describes some of our missionaries.

A mission is not easy. Neither is life. All will be injured in some way. Some of this hurt comes from unresolved transgression. Some comes by way of accident or illness. Some comes when we see those we love either reject the gospel of Jesus Christ or become unfaithful to what they know to be true. But through all of this we come to know God, and we grow to become the Savior's disciples. Our hearts change, and that change becomes permanent as we continue to choose righteousness over sin and doubt.

Those 2,000 stripling warriors were tenacious in their desires. They simply would not give up, even when their path was difficult. A generation earlier their fathers and mothers were taught by Ammon and his brethren. Those missionaries had great success, but they also had to hold on and not give up when their missions became difficult and discouraging.

Ammon describes those times: "Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success" (Alma 26:27).

With patience and tenacity, Ammon and his companions worked through their afflictions and ultimately achieved remarkable success.

Gospel Tenacity

In 1999, Sister Marci Barr came to the Japan Nagoya Mission from Columbus, Ohio, USA. Japanese was not easy for her, but she was tenacious. Once she learned to communicate, she never stopped talking with people about the gospel.

Great promises are made to faithful, persistent, and tenacious missionaries who open their mouths with boldness and love and who work with all their might in the ways the Lord has set forth (see D&C 31:7). But some missionaries become fearful of rejection and let their fears overcome their loving boldness.

Not Sister Barr! She found and taught, and she taught and found all of her mission.

On the last day of her mission, Sister Barr was traveling to the mission home in Nagoya. That night I would interview her and tell her that she had done a wonderful job. The next day she would go home.

As she traveled, she saw a group of high school-age girls talking together on the subway. She approached them and asked if she could visit with them. She spoke of the gospel and its Restoration. Then she gave a missionary tract to one of the girls who seemed interested and told her of the sister missionaries who could teach her the gospel.

Then Sister Barr came to the mission home and had her interview, never telling me of her experience on

the subway. To her it was unremarkable. She was simply doing what she knew was right, all the way to the end. Perhaps this is the best definition of gospel *tenacity* I know: No matter what, continue to have faith in God and His promises, and do what is right all the time, regardless of who knows.

Sister Barr returned home to Columbus. There in a student ward she met her husband, and together they are raising a family in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The girl on the subway—Hitomi Kitayama—was taught by the sister missionaries. Hitomi persevered and displayed her own form of tenacity as she embraced the truths of the gospel, overcoming opposition from family members and her own doubts.

We met Hitomi nearly six years later at a mission conference in Tokyo, where she was serving as a missionary. She told us of meeting Sister Barr on the subway and of her subsequent conversion to the gospel.





STRIVE FOR GREATER DISCIPLINE

"I encourage everyone, young

and old, to review goals and objectives and strive to exercise greater discipline. Our daily conduct and choices should be consistent with our goals."

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Choose Wisely," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 49.

After her mission she met and married another returned missionary, Shimpei Yamashita. Interestingly, Shimpei is the son of a man whom Elder Randy Checketts and I taught in the summer of 1971 while I served my first mission to Japan.

It is not just in spreading the gospel that we need the tenacity to do what is right. We need this same righteous tenacity as we seek to overcome personal sin and temptation, complete our education, and seek temple marriage and an eternal family. We will need tenacity, love, and resilience as we hold on to our spouse and children and work through the challenges that come to every marriage and family. And we will need tenacity, commitment, and patience when the blessings we seek don't come in the time frame we anticipate.

In all of this and in every other righteous thing, our commitment to do right and be right will be challenged by the world. But we must not quit. We need to keep trying until we reach our goal. Our goal, ultimately, is eternal life with our husband or wife, with our children, and with their children for generations to come.

Set Worthy Goals

How do we develop our commitment to do right, and how do we gain strength to keep it?

First, we establish goals worthy of achievement and compatible with our ultimate goal of eternal life. This includes education and employment goals that will lead to and be compatible with family, personal growth, service, activity in the Church, and personal happiness. Part of making these goals will be our own personal choice, but another part must include prayer and personal revelation. If you care enough to seek God's will, He will answer.

Among the many things you should pray about is finding a worthy companion with whom you can go to the temple and make sacred covenants. *If you want to make and keep sacred covenants and have the motivation to achieve your most righteous goals, prayerfully seek the blessings and responsibilities of marriage.*

In this and in other areas of your life, find out what God would have you do.

Study it out. Make decisions. Take them to the Lord and find out. Then move forward with achieving your goals.

In all of this, if we are going to be tenacious in righteous things, we must stay close to the Lord through righteous living. Few things will distract us more from achieving our righteous goals than being unworthy of the blessings of the Spirit in our lives.

Make righteous goals. Always pray and seek the Lord's guidance. Be worthy and avoid those things that will distract from or hinder your progress. Have and use your temple recommend. Keep your covenants, especially when life is hard. Seek the blessings of eternal marriage and family. Then hold on. Don't give up. Don't quit.

Be tenacious in every righteous thing. You will see your faith strengthened, and you will see your strengths and talents deepened and magnified as your faith increases. And remember what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has promised: "Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*."³ ■

From a devotional address, "Tenacity," delivered at Brigham Young University on November 4, 2014. For the full address in English, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Vocabulary.com/dictionary/tenacity.
2. See M. Russell Ballard, "The Greatest Generation of Missionaries," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 47, 48; for how the Book of Mormon describes them, see Alma 53:17–21; 56:17, 45–48; 57:20–21.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "An High Priest of Good Things to Come," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38.