

Despite the prodigal son's fears, he returned home to find that his father loved him as much as he always had.

By Christopher Fosse

There's no way around it; the world can sometimes seem pretty scary. All it takes is a glance through a newspaper or a few minutes watching the evening news to start to feel as though everything is going from bad to worse. Likewise, when faced with personal challenges and the choices we'll need to make as we grow older, we sometimes let our fear paralyze us. Thankfully, as members of the Church, we have resources that can help drive away the anxiety and doubt that naturally come when we face the uncertainty of the future. The words of ancient and modern prophets allow us to see things from a more eternal perspective.

The scriptures and general conference addresses, when we study them in faith, can give us something that will help drive away fear and lead us to a brighter future. The scriptures give us hope.

Here are a few scripture stories to remember whenever you feel afraid or distressed.

Scriptural Messages of

HOPE

Examples from the scriptures show how Jesus Christ can lift you up during trying times.



The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–24)

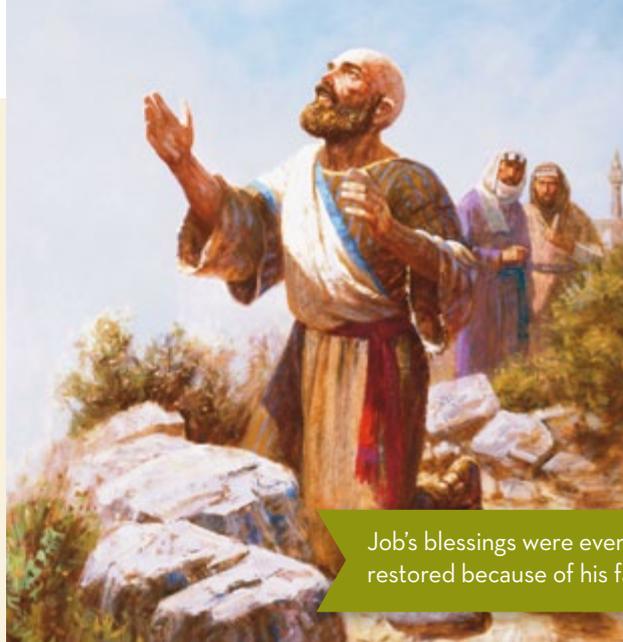
Sometimes we stray from the path of righteousness. Maybe we've made a bad choice and are still being hampered by the consequences. Maybe we've become lazy in keeping our covenants. Whatever the case, it's easy to become discouraged. The way back home may seem daunting.

As with all mortal pains, the Savior understands this feeling and wants to teach us how to overcome it. In His parable of the prodigal son, Jesus Christ described a young man who had made many bad choices. Eventually he saw that his choices had made him unhappy, and he longed for a chance to repent and return to his family. However, he was afraid his family would not be willing to forgive him. Despite his fears, he did return to his family and was shocked to discover that his father loved him just as much as he always had.

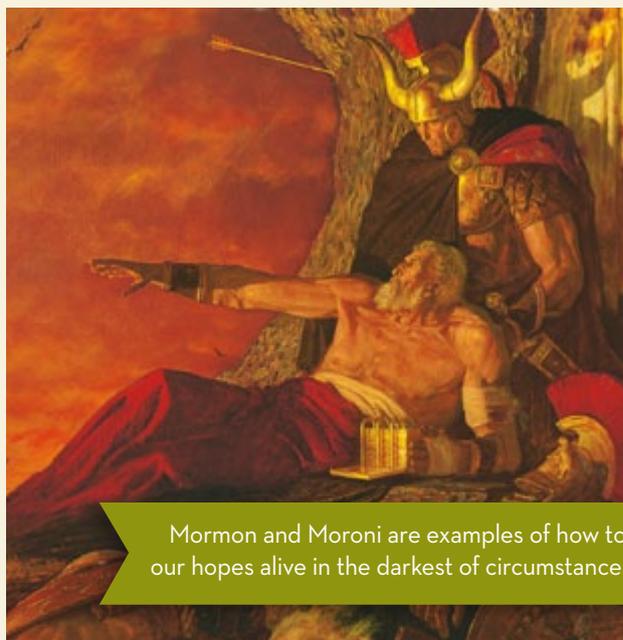
The Savior wants each of us to know that forgiveness is attainable. It might be difficult to make your way back home to Him, but when you do, He will welcome you with joy and love. He wants you back. This understanding—that we can be forgiven and return to our Father in Heaven—is central to the entire plan of salvation (see M. Russell Ballard, “That the Lost May Be Found” *Ensign*, May 2012, 97–100).

The Life of Job (Job 1–42)

Not all of our trials are a result of our own transgressions. Sometimes the Lord allows challenges to come upon us so that we can be strengthened by overcoming them. The Old Testament tells the story of a man who had everything he could possibly want, and then it was all taken away. Job's challenges were bad enough that even his friends and family lost hope for him. His wife even said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Instead, Job took comfort in his faith. Even after losing everything, Job maintained his hope that eventually everything would be OK, whether in this life or the next. Because of his faith, all of his blessings were eventually restored.



Job's blessings were eventually restored because of his faith.



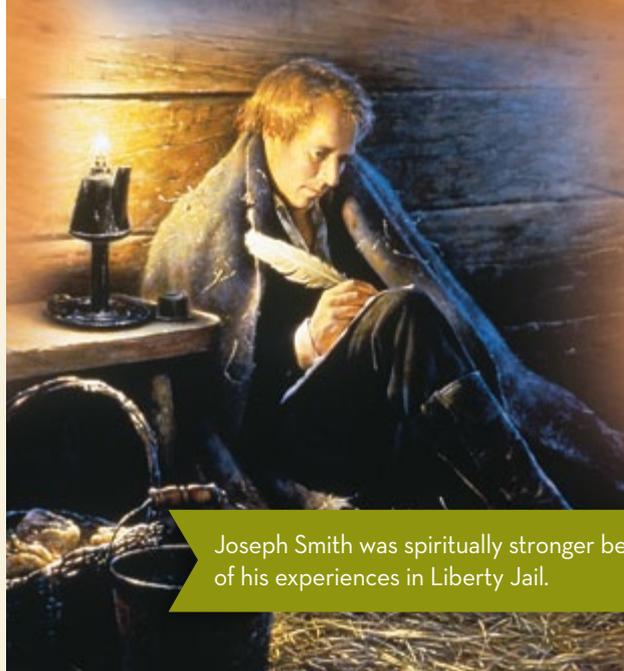
Mormon and Moroni are examples of how to keep our hopes alive in the darkest of circumstances.

Mormon and Moroni's Hope (Mormon 1–2, 7; Moroni 9)

If we ever feel like we live in a world that embraces evil, then we have some small idea what Mormon and his son Moroni must have felt. As the final contributors to the Book of Mormon record, they witnessed their once-great civilization fall into total chaos and horror. In an epistle to his son, Mormon described some of the Nephites' and Lamanites' abhorrent crimes. Nevertheless, Mormon reaffirmed his hope. He had faith in the integrity of his son, and he had hope that although the people might be lost, their descendants might one day be saved through the power of the Lord. Through their conviction, these two great prophets gave us an example of how to keep our hopes alive in even the darkest of circumstances.

Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail (D&C 122)

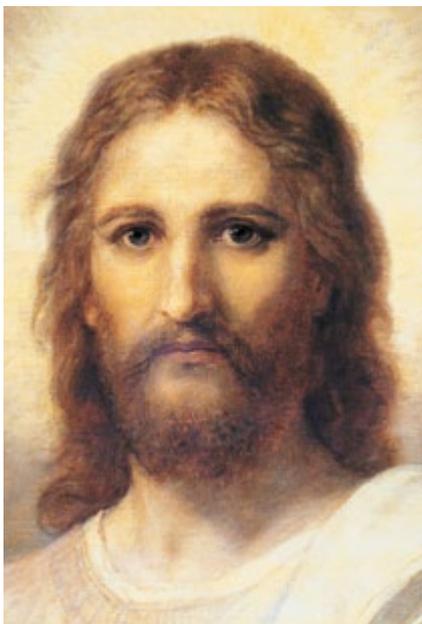
Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration, learned much about the nature of hope during his life. From his earliest records, we see that he was willing to meet his own challenges with confidence in his Savior and faith in the work. However, the Prophet and several of his friends were unjustly imprisoned in the miserable darkness of Liberty Jail. During their incarceration they were starved, abused, and constantly threatened with death. They were mocked, poisoned, and forced to listen to the drunken boasts of jailors who had harmed members of the Church. Joseph described the place as “hell.” But it was in that terrible place that Joseph received a revelation that would forever change him. Cutting through Joseph’s misery, the Lord gave him comfort. Compassionately He reminded Joseph of the Atonement and added, “The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:8). Joseph was a different man when he emerged from the jail, one who was spiritually stronger because of his experiences. Five years later, as the Prophet faced his martyrdom, he retained this lesson of hope. He allowed himself to be led “like a lamb to the slaughter” (D&C 135:4), knowing that the Savior’s Atonement would bear him up in the end.



Joseph Smith was spiritually stronger because of his experiences in Liberty Jail.

In each of these examples we can see that hope and faith go hand in hand. Each builds up the other. Through faith in Heavenly Father and the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, we can gain hope to drive away despair. So if you’re afraid, take a step back and remind yourself of these stories from the scriptures. Remember these words from the Book of Mormon:

“Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God” (Ether 12:4). **NE**



We Believe in **CHRIST**

As you consider messages of hope found in the scriptures and in the words of modern prophets, remember that our hope comes because of Jesus Christ, and we have the responsibility to bear witness of Him. People who have only a brief acquaintance with the Church may not know that we believe in Christ. We can help others know

that we are Christians (see 2 Nephi 25:26). The best way to let others know what we believe is to bear testimony. When we share our feelings about the Savior in a loving and nonconfrontational way and live worthy as followers of Jesus Christ, the Spirit can touch the hearts of those who are ready to feel it.