

# *If You Don't Like It, Change It*

CARRIE ROBERTS

When it was announced that I would be speaking at a devotional, a list of some of the upcoming devotional speakers was posted on the BYU website. When my husband saw my name listed ahead of Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Elder Ulisses Soares, he took a screenshot and sent it to me with text that read, “Listed in order of importance?”

This gave me a good laugh but also impressed upon my mind what an honor it is to be speaking at this pulpit. Even though I feel inadequate for the task at hand, I pray that what I have prepared may benefit you in some way. As I pondered what to say, I reached out to a friend who told me that I couldn't really say anything that hasn't already been said before. All I could do was take you on my journey. So I hope in the process you can learn something from some of the things I have learned in my life.

## **Two Parental Lessons**

The two most memorable pieces of advice I received as a child came from each of my parents. One day I came home from school in a terrible mood. Something had upset me, so I complained and vented to my mother.

Even though this occurred when I was very young, I still remember her wise words: “Carrie, if you don't like something, then change it.”

I was stunned and puzzled. I thought, “Wait! I can do that?”

She added to her advice by saying, “If you think you can or you can't, you are right.”

I had no idea what she was talking about. I was confused, and I thought my mother was speaking in tongues. But for some reason the phrase “If you don't like it, then change it” has always stuck with me. Her lesson is one I want to share with you today. Through your agency and through learning to think and act for yourself, you can create the life that you want.

My dad taught me the other most memorable lesson of my youth. This one came when I was struggling to choose which college I wanted to attend and play golf for. I had several offers but didn't know where to go. Eventually I narrowed my search to three schools. Yet when the time came to sign with a school, I sat at my kitchen table staring at three National Letters of Intent with no idea who to sign with.

At the time my dad was a successful golfer on the Senior PGA Tour. But he didn't try to influence my decision. Instead he allowed me to make my own choice about college.

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*Carrie Roberts, BYU Athletics women's golf coach, delivered this devotional address on February 12, 2019.*

Finally I reached out to my dad and asked him, “Where should I go?”

He responded with a question: “Well, what do you want?”

I was confused. “What do you mean, what do I want?”

He asked another question: “What do you want out of life?”

After thinking about it, I told him what I wanted.

He replied, “Then choose the school that will give you that.”

In order to get what you want in life, you have to first know what you want. It is hard to think and act for yourself when you don’t know what to think and act upon.

### **Learning to Create Happiness**

Knowing what you want is understanding your *why*. Discovering your why is powerful. It brings motivation, passion, and desire. Your why can begin to give meaning to how you live your life. It can also give your life purpose. I think so much pain and confusion could be avoided if people would think and act for themselves and know why they are doing things. By figuring out my why, I was able to create a vision for my life, define what it should look like, and begin to take action to get it.

But that lesson took me a while to figure out. Throughout my life, happiness was hard to come by. In my teenage years I sought exercise to bring me happiness. I worked out every day. I did cardio. I lifted weights, and I thought I looked pretty fit. But doing what I thought I should did not bring the promised happiness.

In my twenties I thought that maybe if I didn’t have to worry about money I would be happy. So I worked. I saved and then I invested, and then the returns came. I am not saying I could buy an island or a private jet, but I didn’t have to worry each month if I could pay my bills. Even though I had fun things and could buy cool shoes, again the promised happiness of doing what I thought I should did not come.

So I turned to the gospel of Jesus Christ for happiness and fulfillment. I diligently studied my scriptures. I faithfully said my prayers. I tried to

be perfect. But even living an obedient life and doing as I thought I should did not bring me the promised happiness. I began to believe that I was just not good enough, smart enough, or pretty enough. Worst of all, I began to think God did not love me. But my thoughts were deceiving me.

In college I was introduced to Dr. Richard A. Heaps, a psychologist here at BYU. He taught me that the happiness I sought wouldn’t just come; I needed to create it. He also taught me that controlling my thoughts would enable me to take the actions necessary to create the happiness I wanted. He taught me that every thought and action I had each day needed to lead me toward the happiness I desired or the things I wanted in life. It took some time, but I began, as Alma said, to have “my soul . . . filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:20). I also learned that to think and act for myself, I could use my agency—as we all can—to build an armor to protect myself against the devil’s greatest tools of self-defeat, discouragement, and the belief that I just wasn’t born good enough for God’s love.

### **Our Purpose on Earth**

The main reason we are here on earth is to learn to become like Heavenly Father. I believe that entails learning to create as He does. Thinking for yourself and taking control of your agency allows you to take action toward the life you want with the help of a loving Father in Heaven who desires to help us forge our own unique journey here in mortality. What is important to us is important to Him. He wants us to use the talents and abilities He has blessed us with to fulfill our dreams and have lives of joy and fulfillment. Like our earthly fathers, who would do anything to help us if we brought to them a well-thought-out plan, our Heavenly Father is the same. This requires us, though, to first understand our why, or what we want. Then we can act on it.

What are your passions and talents? What is it that each of you wants to achieve in your life? With that personal understanding and desire, along with the help of a God who is there to guide and aid you, what you can achieve is without limits and has no boundaries.

It is not important that you understand my purpose or my why. I have to know and understand that. Some would say a mother shouldn't be in the workforce. Am I criticized? Sure. Do people worry about me and my kids? All of the time. Do they counsel my husband on what they think is better for him than to be a work-from-home dad? Sure they do. But they don't need to understand his why, and they don't need to understand our why. We are the only ones who must understand that.

Your journey is to know and understand *your* why so that you can live your life and not someone else's. You are to progress in the way that you need, not in the way that someone else thinks you should.

### Using Our Agency

Throughout our children's lives, my husband and I have tried to teach them to think and act for themselves and develop the power that comes from doing so. Learning to use our agency to create our own lives manifests itself with different opportunities at all stages of life. When my oldest daughter, Mary, was young, she started showing a passion for soccer. As you might guess, my passion is golf. After she read a book by soccer legend Alex Morgan, whose passion was also soccer and whose dad's passion was baseball, Mary related in a sweet and innocent way how she had learned from Alex that she needed to follow what she loved so that she could be happy, just like Alex Morgan had followed her passion and not her dad's. Of course we are on board, allowing her to live her love of playing soccer. But I still tease her that I think her passion is still golf.

An opportunity arose once to teach my son Hank how to make more empowered choices. One evening I pulled an audible and told him I was replacing our usual Little Caesars pizza with a healthier option of an English muffin topped with tomato sauce and fresh mozzarella.

He responded, "Well, I can choose for myself, and I decide not to taste your pizza."

With some motherly teaching—or, as some would say, motherly persuasion—I said he could make that choice only *after* he took a bite of my

alternate selection. And yes, he did end up liking my pizza.

My youngest son, Lincoln, struggles with pronouncing words. Even though he is young, he is learning that he can choose to work harder. Instead of feeling frustrated, he can respond by giving more effort until he can pronounce his words perfectly.

Before we came to earth, we had two plans to choose from. One plan would give us freedom to choose and the other would force us to think and act as someone else would have us do (see Moses 4:1–4). When the decision was made to give the children of the earth power to choose, war ensued. Having our agency was so important that we were willing to go to war to protect it (see Revelation 12:7). The plan of salvation contains agency. Satan "is the father of all lies" (Ether 8:25) and seeks for us to "be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). Satan fought and continues to fight to take away our agency (see Moses 4:3–4). Perhaps, then, the way to defeat Satan and to become more like our Father in Heaven is to take charge of our God-given right to control our agency and to use our ability to think and act for ourselves to create the lives we want. I believe that one of the great lessons we can learn from the gospel is to come to understand the importance of creating our own lives through our agency and through thinking and acting for ourselves.

### Creating the Life We Want

Each day you have the freedom to choose what you want to think and what you want to do. The scriptures remind us often of this gift that God has given us. Thinking for yourself allows you to figure out what you want. Once you know what you want, you can begin to use your agency to act on it. But the key is self-confidence. You must act, as the scriptures say, "doubting nothing" (Mormon 9:21) and with "nothing wavering" (James 1:6). It is our divine birthright to use our agency to create the life we want. We have been told, "God cares a lot more about . . . who we are becoming than about who we once were."<sup>1</sup> I find this to be a great example of how God encourages us to recognize our righteous desires and make

decisions that will lead us to the life we want—a life that brings us joy.

The author George L. Rogers, summing up the philosophy of Benjamin Franklin, had this to say about choice:

*We stand at the crossroads,  
each minute,  
each hour,  
each day,  
making choices.*

*We choose  
the thoughts  
we allow ourselves to think,  
the passions  
we allow ourselves to feel,  
and the actions  
we allow ourselves to perform.<sup>2</sup>*

When we ourselves stand at those daily crossroads, are we thinking and acting for ourselves? Or are we allowing others to dictate who we are and what we do? Are we allowing others to tell us what we can become? Are we living lives of mediocrity because someone told us that is all we can do? Are we allowing others to dictate what we are worth? Are you allowing other people to own your identity?

### **A Little Bit Better Each Day**

As the British writer James Allen said, “Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves.”<sup>3</sup> The principle of thinking and acting for yourself and using your agency to create the life you want is about self-improvement. It is about being better than you were the day before. On our golf team we call this “win the day.” It is all about getting a little bit better each day until you get what you want. As the scriptures say, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). It is an accumulation of focused effort. If you put enough good days together, you will be rewarded. It is the daily consistency of acting as you choose that builds and ultimately gets you what you want and where you want to be.

James Allen, using Proverbs 23:7, also taught us that “as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he.”<sup>4</sup> Our attitude is everything. It determines what we think about ourselves, which determines how successful we will be. Thinking and acting for yourself and using your agency to create the life you want allows you to know what you want and who you want to be, which will provide you the confidence to never give up when obstacles mount. The obstacles become a pleasure and something to learn from because you understand that those obstacles are just part of the process of reaching what you want.

### **“Why Not Me?”**

When you understand your why and are thinking and acting for yourself, you approach life with the attitude of “Why not me?” Someone is going to get what they want, so why not me? It is similar to my attitude toward the lottery: someone is going to win, so why not me? You continuously seek to improve yourself and your circumstances. You look for reasons why you can instead of why you can’t. You focus on what you can control and center your day on what it will take to inch closer to what you want. You work as if you cannot and will not fail. You are totally committed to your purpose. You become unwavering and unbending on your journey. It is acting as Nephi did to promptings with the phrase “I will go and do” (1 Nephi 3:7). It is being able to continue to act even though your plans didn’t work out the first time and your brothers Laman and Lemuel doubt and ridicule you, but you persevere and try again until you succeed because it is your purpose (see 1 Nephi 3–4). It is having the attitude of confidence like the stripling warriors, who acted without fear because “they did not doubt” (Alma 56:47).

When you understand your why and you think and act for yourself, you can then preserve your identity amid outside pressure to be someone or something you are not. That way, when the pressures of the world and the doubters and the naysayers beat upon you, you are unmoved because you know and understand your purpose and why you do what you do. You are not like the people

who held to the iron rod, endured through the mist of darkness, and even tasted of the fruit but felt ashamed when they saw the people laughing and mocking. Instead, you hold firm to the rod, enjoy through the mist of darkness, take a delicious bite of the fruit, and then point to the people in the great and spacious building and say, "It is a shame you are missing out. I think you should try some." (See 1 Nephi 8:21–30.)

Christ was the perfect example of someone who understood His purpose. Even though He was doubted, criticized, spit upon, whipped, betrayed by His closest friends, and convicted of a crime He did not commit, He simply did not give up because it was too hard or because people did not believe in Him. Instead He continued till the end because He knew His purpose and He knew His why.

### **The Lesson of David and Goliath**

One of my favorite stories of someone who knew what he wanted and then thought and acted for himself to get it is the story of David's courageous fight against Goliath. I have always felt similar to David. As the youngest child in my family, I was the smallest. Also, like David, I have sought out big, scary goals that could intimidate like Goliath. Just as the people surrounding David doubted and discouraged him, people have told me I couldn't achieve some goals simply because they were too big.

Imagine how much opposition David faced. While trying to gather the courage to go one-on-one with a giant, he met with resistance from his own countrymen, who didn't believe in him. Through his faith, David knew he could do it. After all, he had taken down lions and bears. Best of all, he had such great courage that he didn't just creep forward to face Goliath; he ran toward him. David decided for himself what he wanted, acted on his courage, overcame doubters, and then ran toward his goal and singlehandedly defeated his gigantic opponent.

Because David could think for himself, he knew what he wanted. Because he could act for himself, he created a plan and used his agency to execute with self-belief and confidence. Instead of listening to the naysayers who thought he was too young or lacked experience and instead

of doubting his abilities, he focused on what he wanted. He worked hard, protected his sheep by killing bears and lions, and, with self-confidence, ran toward accomplishing his goals. How many of us listen to the naysayers and instead of running toward what we want, run away from it?

### **Confidence Through Adversity**

When athletes discover their why and act on it with belief, greatness happens. I have seen a player start as a walk-on, have no business being in our starting lineup, and end up becoming not only the best player on our team but the best player in our conference and one of the best players in the country. I have seen good players who were just okay turn into All-Americans. I have seen great players accomplish their dreams long before they thought they could.

A few years ago, when I was meeting with my team captains before the beginning of the year, I asked, "What do you want for this team? What do you want to accomplish?"

Without hesitation they said they had met previously and thought that NCAA regionals were great, but they wanted to compete at the national championship. At the time we were an up-and-coming team. This would be the first year I had my own players I had recruited. I didn't know exactly what we were capable of. But I knew that if that is what they wanted, we could create a plan to get it. We just needed to work really hard to get it and have complete buy-in from everyone. We talked about the plan of attack and introduced it to the team. The most important part was that this was their desire, their want, and their goal. My job was to show them how to get it and to hold them accountable to the things they said they would do to get it.

Winning in golf is a very difficult thing to do. You can have a long career, make millions of dollars, and never win, and yet you can still be considered successful. Winning once a year as a team is quite a big deal. Those teams who do it more than once are elite.

This particular year, with what we wanted clearly defined and our why as solid as could be, we won five out of nine events, including our first conference championship since 1992. After our

conference win, we headed to regionals. There it didn't matter what you had done previously. You now had to place in the top six in the field of eighteen to advance to the national championship. The teams were put into four regions, and we were sent to Louisiana to play at a very difficult golf course against a very difficult field with conditions that we were not used to. We would play three rounds of eighteen holes to determine our fate.

With one round to go, we were in fifth place. But we had one more day left. On the final day I checked to see where we were after nine holes, which meant we had nine holes to go. We were behind about six strokes. Deep down I knew that anything could happen, and I thought to myself, "Okay, ladies, if you want to go to nationals, then now is the time to take us there."

As we were playing the fifteenth hole, I saw us make some key mistakes that caused some big scores. I thought, "No, no, no!"

But on the scoreboard we were somehow now even with the team ahead of us. I looked at our girls. They were calm, stoic. They appeared to know exactly why they were there and what they wanted to accomplish. With a look of confidence that they would not be denied their goal, they proceeded to the next hole to play as if the mistakes hadn't happened.

When we had three holes to go, the team with which we were tied had finished. Now it was up to us. We had to have all four counting players finish one under on the last three holes to make it to nationals. This was no small feat. Our sophomore hit a clutch approach shot on the last hole to secure the birdie that we needed. When I asked her what she was thinking, knowing that she would have to wait forty-five minutes for the rest of her team to finish, she said, "I wasn't thinking, let alone breathing."

Now it was up to the next three counting players to finish strong. I was with our junior, who hit her approach in the greenside bunker on the last hole. With a difficult up-and-down, she curled in a ten-foot putt to secure our one-stroke lead.

Now all we needed was our last two players to finish par or better. The entire left side of the finishing hole on this golf course was water. If you

missed left, you had to take a penalty and add a stroke to your score. We learned later that the opposing team lost eight shots on that hole alone. Our conference player of the year was up next and had left herself with a nerve-racking fifteen-foot putt to save par. With a small chance to make it, she willed the ball into the hole.

With our number-one player still to finish, we received a text message that she had a short putt for birdie to give us a two-stroke advantage. But she hit the putt too hard and made an improbable three-putt to put us into a tie. I met her in the fairway on the last hole to discuss the approach. She felt confident in a six iron and let it rip. With what her dad says was the best six iron of her life, she put her approach ten feet or so above the hole. We dissected that putt from every angle to make sure we knew exactly how she should play that putt. The ball just happened to be sitting on a ledge, and from one angle it looked like the ball would go left. From the other angle it looked like it would go right. So we decided to play it straight. When later asked why she smiled before she hit the putt, she commented, "Because I knew I was going to make it." As the putt dropped and the crowd roared, an opposing coach called it "the most exciting moment in golf that she has been a part of."

We had now accomplished our goal of qualifying for the national championship. What was unique about this experience is that we were the first BYU team to require the NCAA to move their national championship since one of the rounds was played on Sunday. The girls handled it like pros and put BYU women's golf on the map. They defined what they wanted. Every day they worked to get a little closer to that goal. They remembered their why each day, and they proceeded with confidence even through adversity to ultimately be awarded their goal. And afterward we celebrated in true BYU fashion by toasting our chocolate milks at a Louisiana Waffle House at 2 a.m.

### **Your Divine Birthright**

To become a champion in life is to discover your why, learn to think and act for yourself, and use your agency to create the life you want. Paraphrasing the words of Bob Rotella, you are

the author of your own story. What you write is up to you. Will you take control of your divine birthright and “be heroic or just someone trying to get by? Will you be the star or someone sitting on the end of the bench?”<sup>5</sup> We are free to choose how to live our lives. “We’re free to choose what we’re going to think about ourselves.”<sup>6</sup> No one can stop us—as the millennials would say—from living our best life. Yet many people choose not to live their best life. They are choosing to believe that they don’t have a chance, that the competition is better, tougher, and more skilled than they are. They are choosing to believe that they were not born to succeed. “They’re choosing to be mediocre.”<sup>7</sup>

You get to choose. Will you own your life or let someone else own it?

### “Help Your Teammate First”

We have a saying on our team that goes like this: “Help your teammate first.” Why? Because we are all in this together. We cannot win by ourselves. We have to win as a team. It does us no good to watch our teammate struggle while we know how to help them. We build trust, loyalty, and strength among teammates when we give of ourselves to make them better. And so it is with life. When it comes to life, it doesn’t matter who is stronger, faster, smarter, or prettier; whose kids are more talented; or who has more things. Sometimes we forget our why and our purpose and act based on what other people think and do when we put ourselves in competition with people who are no threat to our eternal destiny.

When we become aware that every soul on earth is equal, that no soul is greater than any other, we will hopefully remember our why, act on it, and help others discover theirs and help them act on it. As Jon Gordon said, “You are here for a reason. You have a purpose and you are meant to live and share it.”<sup>8</sup>

Yes, your roommate is awesome. While it may seem to you that your neighbor has it all put together, one thing remains the same: you have the exact same potential as they do. Yes, they are good, but so are you. You have the same ability to think and act for yourself. You have the same ability to make choices. You have the same ability to work as hard as you possibly can, and you have

the same ability to believe in yourself. So rise up, ye “loyal Cougars,” and when it comes to sports, “hurl your [greatest] challenge to the foe.”<sup>9</sup> But when it comes to life, remember, “the noblest aim in life is to strive to live to make other lives better and happier.”<sup>10</sup>

I want to encourage you today to begin to think and act for yourself. Find your passions. Figure out what you truly want in life. Discover your why. Then go to work acting for yourself to create the life you want. Knowing, understanding, and discovering your why is powerful. Acting on it is life changing.

Remember, if there is something in your life you don’t like, you have the power to change it. I pray that we will have the strength to be who we were meant to be: more Christlike people who think and act for ourselves and live the lives we were meant to live.

I say these things humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

1. Dale G. Renlund, “Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” *Ensign*, May 2015.

2. “Franklin’s Formula for Successful Living Number Three,” in *Benjamin Franklin’s the Art of Virtue: His Formula for Successful Living*, ed. George L. Rogers (Eden Prairie, Minnesota: Acorn Publishing, 1996), 88.

3. James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh* (Mount Vernon, New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1957), 20.

4. See James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*, 7.

5. Bob Rotella with Bob Cullen, *How Champions Think: In Sports and in Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 3.

6. Rotella and Cullen, *How Champions Think*, 2.

7. Rotella and Cullen, *How Champions Think*, 3.

8. Jon Gordon, “My Best Advice for Graduates and Anyone with a Dream,” *Positive Strategies to Fuel Your Life and Career*, 1 May 2017, [jongordon.com/positivetip/best-advice.html](http://jongordon.com/positivetip/best-advice.html).

9. “The Cougar Song,” Clyde D. Sandgren, words and music, 1932; copyright by his son, Clyde D. Sandgren Jr., 1947.

10. David O. McKay, “Editorial: The Noblest Calling in Life,” *Millennial Star* 86, no. 14 (3 April 1924): 217.