

# *Healing = Courage + Action + Grace*

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I should start by confessing I will likely cry. I am a therapist. I can't help it; emotion is what I do. But in my defense, I bet no one on this campus looks more like Bronco Mendenhall than I do, and we all know he is very manly. Wait for the hat and the super-serious stare. Do you see what I mean? When we first moved to Utah, two of our children were walking around campus, and they saw Bronco. Our then thirteen-year-old daughter said, "Dad, you do look just like him—minus the muscles."

Notwithstanding my emotional or physical condition during this talk, please remember as I speak today that it is never about the messenger; it is about the message. I pray I can remember what Martin Luther King Jr. said to himself before his first speech at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church: "Keep Martin Luther King in the background and God in the foreground and everything will be all right. Remember you are a channel of the gospel and not the source."<sup>1</sup>

On that note, I want you to know how much I am humbled by this opportunity. I have tremendous respect for the BYU devotional experience. I have for years read, listened to, and benefited from BYU devotionals.

I keep a long list of talks in a file that I give out to clients, family members, friends, and young adults like you. I have seen many times that healing, hope, and peace can come through the word of God, or, as Jacob said, "the pleasing word of God, . . . which healeth the wounded soul" (Jacob 2:8).

For that reason I felt perhaps the most helpful thing I can do is simply provide a list of resources in the endnotes of this talk. I hope these references will help you, your family, your friends, bishops, and therapists as we all try to deal with the adversities of life and find healing. I have organized the references by topic (for example, adversity, depression, anxiety, pornography, and same-gender attraction) and have listed the talks (most often BYU devotionals) that might be helpful to some reader in the future. Throughout this talk I will reference many different authors and highlight additional reading that may be helpful for those who are interested. Please take the time to read through the endnotes. I know that healing can be found as we listen to and read

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*Jonathan G. Sandberg was a professor in the BYU School of Family Life when this devotional address was given on 21 January 2014.*

words of wisdom and apply the true principles found therein.

### **A Formula for Healing**

That brings me to today's topic: healing. We all need healing. For some of us that need is great today. There are likely among us those who are brokenhearted because a relationship has ended badly. Others are in pain because their parents have decided to divorce or a loved one has renounced the Church. Some have learned recently that they have a chronic illness, and others have just relapsed into addictive behavior for what seems like the hundredth time. I would guess that there are some today who have wondered if depression or anxiety will always be a suffocating influence in their lives, while other students are going through a loss that seems both unfair and unrelenting. Others are drowning in loneliness and isolation while still others are constantly placed on the margins, even here at BYU.

Perhaps these folks look or talk or feel different from what may be considered "the norm." This group is broader than we may think and often includes new converts; those who experience same-gender attraction; those who are fortunate enough to have diversity in their ethnic, racial, or cultural background (please see the topic section "Diversity—Its Value and Worth to BYU and the Church" at the end of the talk); or those who do not like to sing songs about eternal and happy families because that has not been their experience. Even the greatest among us, Jesus Christ, experienced betrayal, mocking, abandonment, loss of loved ones, and physical pain as part of His mortal experience.

My hope today is to encourage you that healing is possible if you apply the principles that lead to healing. I will try to explain clearly—and I ask for your prayers that we can understand one another by the Spirit—three principles that can lead to healing and to

knowing that all healing is a gift from Jesus Christ, for, as Isaiah said, "with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

My talk is entitled "Healing = Courage + Action + Grace." And in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., who was recently listed in Ted Stewart's *The Mark of a Giant*<sup>2</sup> as one of seven people who changed the world, I start with an example from his life that so clearly highlights these principles. Look for courage, action, and grace as I read his words:

*Almost immediately after the [bus boycott] started we had begun to receive threatening telephone calls and letters. They increased as time went on. . . .*

*One night . . . I couldn't sleep. It seemed that all of my fears had come down on me at once. . . .*

*. . . I had heard these things before, but for some reason that night it got to me. . . . I went to the kitchen and . . . I sat there and thought about a beautiful little daughter who had just been born. . . . I started thinking about a dedicated and loyal wife, who was over there asleep. And she could be taken from me, or I could be taken from her. And I got to the point that I couldn't take it any longer. . . . With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud . . . : "Lord, I'm down here trying to do what's right. I think I'm right. I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But Lord, I must confess that I'm weak now, I'm faltering. I'm losing my courage. Now, I am afraid. . . . I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone."*

*It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: "Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo, I will be with you. Even until the end of the world."*

*I tell you . . . I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me alone. At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before. Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything.<sup>3</sup>*

Can you see in this example the pathway to healing? Courage to face a difficult situation and stand for truth, acting in faith by turning to God in prayer, and peace and strength from the Lord through His grace—courage, action, grace.

### Healing

What then is healing, and why should we seek it? My favorite talk on the subject of healing is a BYU devotional given by Elaine S. Marshall in 2002 entitled “Learning the Healer’s Art.” I strongly recommend you study it. I assign it in every class I teach, from undergraduate to doctoral level. I suggest you read it more than once. Listen closely to her definition of healing:

*On [my] first day as a nurse, I assumed cure, care, and healing to be synonymous. I have learned they are not the same. Healing is not cure. Cure is clean, quick, and done—often under anesthesia. . . . Healing, however, is often a lifelong process of recovery and growth in spite of, **maybe because of**, enduring physical, emotional, or spiritual assault. It requires time. . . .*

*. . . It requires all the energy of your entire being. You have to be there, fully awake, aware, and participating when it happens.<sup>4</sup>*

Healing is much more than “getting better” or “having our problems go away.” Healing is growth, development, and maturation. In a word, healing is change. It takes time and energy and struggle, but healing teaches us. As Marshall said:

*Healing can help us to become more sensitive and more awake to life. . . . Healing invites gifts of humility and faith. It opens our hearts to . . . truth, beauty, . . . and grace.<sup>5</sup>*

But remember, even with all that beauty and growth and grace, healing does hurt.

Some people I have had the privilege of working with over the years have had a hard

time reconciling the fact that healing requires suffering and yet is a gift from our Savior. How is it that a loving God would allow us to suffer? I have come to realize that my Savior cares more about my growth than He does about my comfort. One evidence of His love is that He does not spare me from the suffering I need for my development and progression, even when I get mad at Him. As a client once told me, “I used to feel guilty for getting mad at God. Then I realized He can handle it.”

And, unlike other humans, He does not punish me when I am mad or hold a grudge or remind me of it the next time my heart is right and I ask for His help.

I love how Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described healing:

*Healing blessings come in many ways, each suited to our individual needs, as known to Him who loves us best. Sometimes a “healing” . . . lifts our burden. But sometimes we are “healed” by being given strength or understanding or patience to bear the burdens placed upon us.<sup>6</sup>*

As we consider the key components for healing, let us remember that, in the end, healing is a gift from our Savior that will likely require effort and suffering on our part so that we can grow and develop through our struggles. The gift is often the refinement we experience in the process.

Let me give you one example from one of my heroes. When the relatively young Nelson Mandela first entered prison, he was described by his peers as too “emotional” (meaning he lacked self-control), “passionate” (meaning he had a temper), and “quickly stung” (easily offended), but when he left prison twenty-seven years later, the words he would use to describe himself were “balanced,” “measured,” and “controlled.”<sup>7</sup> As Richard Stengel noted in his excellent book on lessons learned from Mandela, “Nelson Mandela had many

teachers in his life, but the greatest of them all was prison.”<sup>8</sup> When he was pestered about how prison had changed him, Mandela simply said, “I came out mature.”<sup>9</sup>

Was prison a healing experience for Mandela? It depends on how you describe healing. As described in Elder Oaks’ words, Mandela developed in prison the strength, understanding, and patience necessary to bear the burdens that were placed on him. What were those burdens? In the midst of decades of violent and hate-filled conflict, Mandela left prison to lead two groups into the miraculously peaceful development of a democracy, preventing the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives in a bloody civil war. Is that healing? I would say yes. Mandela’s personal healing fostered nationwide healing. His life is an example of how courage, action, and grace lead to healing.

### **Courage**

Let’s shift our focus for a moment to courage. Simply defined, true “courage is not the absence of fear; it is the making of action in spite of fear.”<sup>10</sup> In order for healing to occur, we have to be courageous enough to move forward when we are afraid. I have chosen three examples in which courage is needed for healing to occur.

First, we have to be courageous to face the truth regarding what needs to change in our lives. This type of intense introspection requires tremendous honesty with ourselves. As Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32; see also 2 Nephi 28:28), but that is usually only after it hurts us first. Most of what I know about the courage to heal I have learned from clients. I have noticed among those who do find healing a real commitment to learning the truth about themselves, which is never easy.

I once asked a client if he really wanted to change—if he wanted to change badly enough to hear the truth about his role in his marriage.

He said yes, so I told him I thought he was a diva who interacted with his wife from a selfish and entitled place. I was impressed with his response to me. After a chuckle he said, “You are probably right, and I do not want to be a diva anymore. I want someone to call me out on my stuff, and I want to change.” He was back the next week ready to work. I appreciated his courage. It takes courage to be honest with ourselves.

Second, it takes tremendous courage to be congruent—to live a life in which our public and private priorities are in sync and in which what we experience on the inside is consistent with what we show on the outside. I like what marriage and family therapist William J. Doherty said about integrity. He stated, “Integrity is harmony between our moral beliefs and our actions.”<sup>11</sup>

I learned this lesson the hard way when a colleague at Syracuse University gave me some pointed and painful feedback. After one faculty meeting he said to me, “It must be exhausting being you, living a two-faced life.”

When I asked him what he meant, he explained, “I cannot believe that the guy I see at work, who seems to say anything that will help him fit into the group he is with, is the same guy who attends church on Sunday.”

A little context may help with this story. I was hired at Syracuse as a twenty-eight-year-old recent graduate who was a white male conservative Christian working in a liberal, social activist program.

Unfortunately my colleague was correct. I desperately wanted to fit in and was unsure about what I really thought and felt regarding socially and politically intense topics like same-gender marriage. I was posing and pretending to try to fit in. As James in the New Testament said, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).

My colleague’s feedback became more personal, for both him and for me, as he went on to say, “Look, as a black man, if the Ku Klux

Klan came to town, I know you would hide me in your basement, but as soon as they came to your door, you would turn me over to save yourself.”

In essence, my colleague was saying, “I do not trust you because you do not have the courage to be congruent in all settings.”

It took time to internalize that feedback and realize he was right. I had to figure out what I believed—not what my parents had said was right or the Church or my employer, but what I believed was right. I had to get right between God and me. Then I had to learn to live congruently so that my actions were in harmony with my moral beliefs—which took courage.

But oh, how refreshing it is to live a life of integrity! Healing requires the courage to find out that what we believe is true and live according to that truth. As the therapist Brené Brown has astutely observed:

*Trying to co-opt or win over someone . . . is always a mistake, because it means trading in your authenticity for approval. You stop believing in your worthiness and start hustling for it.<sup>12</sup>*

I have learned over the years that posturing, posing, peacocking, and pretending are exhausting and bring unhappiness. Having the courage to be congruent brings a settled and peaceful feeling. I like what Elijah in the Old Testament said about congruence: “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

Third, we have to develop the courage to live counter to the world’s dominant culture. You know what I am talking about—the culture in which money, sex, material possessions, fame, violent behavior, and carnal exploits are the currency for success. We live in a world in which appearance and approval are the keys to social status and power.<sup>13</sup> In order to find healing, we have to develop the courage to say no to this dominant culture. I love what Morrie Schwartz said to Mitch Albom about living

counter to the culture in the book *Tuesdays with Morrie*:

*The culture we have does not make people feel good about themselves. We’re teaching the wrong things. And you have to be strong enough to say if the culture doesn’t work, don’t buy it. Create your own.<sup>14</sup>*

A number of wonderful BYU devotionals have described the unhealthy culture of perceived perfectionism and how we have to fight against it. In two devotionals given last year, both Tyler J. Jarvis and Kristin L. Matthews encouraged us to be more accepting of our imperfections and to be more pleased with our best approximations, our bodies, our gifts, and our differences. I encourage you to reread their talks.<sup>15</sup>

Listen to what President Thomas S. Monson said about having the courage to live by truth and to avoid the unhealthy dominant culture:

*Let us have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle. Courage, not compromise, brings the smile of God’s approval. . . . A moral coward is one who is afraid to do what he thinks is right because others will disapprove or laugh.<sup>16</sup>*

In her delightful way, author and devoted mother and grandmother Marjorie Pay Hinckley described the peace that comes when we refuse to compare and despair, as the dominant culture teaches:

*Fifty was my favorite age. It takes about that long to learn to quit competing—to be yourself and settle down to living. It is the age I would like to be through all eternity!<sup>17</sup>*

In order to find healing, we have to develop the courage to avoid the culture that says there is only one acceptable way (i.e., a specific size, hair color, or ACT score) to be a good person or even a good Christian. There are many, many

ways to be a righteous, positive influence in the world. If enough of us say no to the dominant culture, it will lose its power (see Joshua 1:9).<sup>18</sup>

### **Action**

This brings us to the next part of the equation of courage + action + grace = healing.

Action is essential to healing. To act instead of merely being acted upon was a key issue in the War in Heaven before we came to this earth (see Revelation 12:7–11). According to the scriptures, “God gave unto man [and woman] that [they] should act for [themselves]” (2 Nephi 2:16), but Satan “sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3). When pondering these scriptures, I realized that when I choose to be inactive or place myself in a state of being acted upon, I give Satan greater power in my life.

A number of scriptures describe clearly the need to act and not be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26; D&C 43:8–9),<sup>19</sup> but how is action related to healing? I have come to see that action is the point at which belief turns into faith. When we act in faith, moving ahead on a good path, we open the door to grace. Having the courage to act opens the door to grace, which is the key to healing. Learning to act in faith is one of the great challenges of mortality.<sup>20</sup>

What then are the major roadblocks to acting in faith? I would suggest that procrastination and fear are two of Satan’s greatest tools to keep us in the “acted upon” position. If Satan can convince us that our fear is too great to be able to act or that to act is a great idea but we should do it later, he can prevent us from opening the door to grace.

Think about how he does this. Maybe you tell yourself, “I totally plan on getting married. It is a great idea and I am pro-marriage, but I have to do these other things first.”

Or, “My life is in a holding pattern right now. I am not sure where I should go or what I should do until I get married. I am stuck.”<sup>21</sup>

Or, “I know this problem I have [insert pornography,<sup>22</sup> eating patterns, or anxiety] needs to be fixed, but I have too much to do right now to put the time and energy into addressing it.”

Or, “I cannot go to my bishop to resolve this sin because I am afraid he will see how far I have fallen and he will not want or will not be able to help me.”

Can you see how effective procrastination and fear are in meeting Satan’s objectives in our lives?

Remember, the longer we remain in an inactive state, the farther we drift from the Lord and His Spirit. As C. S. Lewis astutely described, “The more often [a person] feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel.”<sup>23</sup>

How then can we overcome the tendency to procrastinate or shut down in fear? Let me propose that prayer is the simplest form of action.<sup>24</sup> Remember the truth in this hymn: “Prayer will change the night to day. So, when life gets dark and dreary, Don’t forget to pray.”<sup>25</sup>

When you pray, you act in faith and open the door to “blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them.”<sup>26</sup>

In your prayers, be sure to speak openly, sincerely, and directly to Him who is your loving Father. Sometimes I fear our prayers are too vague and too passive to bring about the spiritual support we need.<sup>27</sup>

We need to learn how to offer mighty prayer. For example, you might fervently plead, “Heavenly Father, I am procrastinating again. I am getting stuck in that old pattern. Please help me to break free. Please give me the strength to just get started and then the stamina to stick with the task.”

Or, “Heavenly Father, I am totally shut down in fear. I need to move forward and act, but this prayer is all I can muster up right now. Please help me find the courage to act.”

I promise those prayers will be heard and help will come. We call that help grace.

And remember, you can still act, even if you are afraid or feel like procrastinating. My favorite example of this type of action is Mother Teresa. I love this quote about her from writer Marcus Goodyear:

*Mother Teresa doubted. Her spirit wavered. . . . Some days she questioned herself. Some days she questioned God.*

*And this is the biggest encouragement of all. Even Mother Teresa had doubts. . . . Her doubt gives me hope; not that my own doubt will go away but that feelings of doubt are not as powerful as a faithful decision to act.*

*I may doubt, but I still pray. I still go to church. I still worship. . . .*

*Doubt is a feeling, but faith chooses to act no matter our feelings.<sup>28</sup>*

Another great example of acting in the face of understandable fear is Rosa Parks.<sup>29</sup> Over the last three years I have had the privilege of coteaching a civil rights course and visiting historical sites central to the civil rights movement. One of my favorite sites to visit is the Rosa Parks Museum. Mrs. Parks is known for her courageous stand on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, when she refused to give up her seat. Until visiting her museum and reading more about her life, I did not realize that numerous African Americans had been beaten, arrested, raped, or shot in Montgomery during the decade before her refusal to give up her seat—all for taking a similar stance to Mrs. Parks' action.

In my study of her, I have learned that Mrs. Parks was courageously acting long before that winter day in 1955. For example, she served as secretary in the local chapter of the NAACP and was a vigorous advocate for justice for black women who had been brutally raped in the South. However, as will be our experience, most of her courageous acts were unknown

and unheralded. In the case of the bus boycott, she was in the right place at the right time, willing to do the right thing, which helped bring needed change to our country.

I have since asked myself, "Am I in the right place doing the right thing, willing to act as God prompts so I can do the work He has given me?" Listen to how one biographer described Mrs. Parks' courage to act: "Parks made an active choice in that instance. . . . In a moment designed to frighten and degrade, she was able to see herself as an agent and claim a space of choice."<sup>30</sup> I love that phrase "see herself as an agent and claim a space of choice." When we have the courage to act, we open the door to healing. Mrs. Parks' courageous act opened the door to the civil rights movement, a movement that brought a large measure of needed healing to this country.

### Grace

That brings us to the final part of the equation—healing = courage + action + grace. What is grace? I love the definition provided by David A. Bednar in a devotional given while he was president of BYU–Idaho. He quoted the Bible Dictionary, which states that grace can be defined as

*divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.*

*. . . It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals . . . receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power.<sup>31</sup>*

After reading this definition, President Bednar then added, "Thus the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity."<sup>32</sup>

The scriptures are full of examples of the grace of Jesus Christ as He ministered to people struggling to do and be good but

coming up short. The scriptures teach of Him reaching out to His people at their breaking point and providing strength, patience, joy, comfort, assurances, peace, faith, hope, courage, and determination and even wiping away the tears from their eyes (see Mosiah 24:13–16; Alma 31:31–38, 58:9–12; Revelation 21:4). The grace of Jesus Christ, His bounteous mercy and love, is available to us if we but have the courage to reach out to Him.<sup>33</sup>

Sometimes that grace comes directly through the Holy Ghost, and we can feel His clear and specific love for us. Sometimes that grace comes as Christ touches another person's heart and prompts her or him to share, bless, and uplift another. In other words, grace is often made manifest through the courage and action of a person who reaches out to serve another. Let me give you an example of the principle of reaching out from the childhood of Thomas S. Monson, the president of the Church:

*Again Christmastime had come. We were preparing for the oven a gigantic turkey and anticipating the savory feast that awaited. A neighborhood pal of mine asked a startling question: "What does turkey taste like?"*

*I responded, "Oh, about like chicken tastes."*

*Again a question: "What does chicken taste like?"*

*It was then that I realized my friend had never eaten chicken or turkey. I asked what his family was going to have for Christmas dinner. There was no prompt response, just a downcast glance and the comment, "I dunno. There's nothing in the house."*

*I pondered a solution. There was none. I had no turkeys, no chickens, no money. Then I remembered I did have two pet rabbits. Immediately I took them to my friend and handed the box to him with the comment, "Here, take these two rabbits. They're good to eat—just like chicken."*

*He took the box, climbed the fence, and headed for home—a Christmas dinner safely assured. Tears came easily to me as I closed the door to the empty rabbit hutch. But I was not sad. A warmth, a feeling*

*of indescribable joy, filled my heart. It was a memorable Christmas.<sup>34</sup>*

President Monson was a minister of grace (see 1 Peter 4:10), and we can be one too.

Grace is the power by which healing occurs. In every aspect of His mortal and postmortal ministry, Christ went about healing all manner of afflictions (see Matthew 9:18–25; 3 Nephi 17:9). His part is to be our atoning Savior, and our part is to be courageous enough to act. He then provides the grace and healing. However, sometimes we may not appreciate the manifestations of His grace because healing blessings do not always come in the form we ask. *Sometimes His grace is made manifest by letting us sit and struggle with an issue.* Again, our Heavenly Father and Savior are more interested in our growth and progression than in our comfort and convenience.<sup>35</sup> Moments of struggle often bring the greatest growth.<sup>36</sup>

Permit me to illustrate this point with an example from the life of my sweetheart and best friend, Sharon. In April 2002, Sharon's fifty-six-year-old father, Mike, suffered a major heart attack one day at work. As a result of a lack of oxygen to the brain, he was in a coma for a week. Many friends and family members prayed and fasted, he received multiple blessings, and his name was placed on the prayer roll at multiple temples, but, regardless of these efforts, it was his time to die (see D&C 42:43–48). As the months passed, we came to some measure of peace regarding his early and unexpected death.

At the time, Sharon was working with the young children at church as the Primary president. It was her turn to teach the children, and the topic was "God Hears and Answers My Prayers." We talked a lot about that lesson and the dilemma it presented for her, and Doctrine and Covenants 18:18 and 88:64 were particularly helpful at the time.

My wife said, "I know God hears and answers our prayers, but if in the end He is



going to do what is His will, why should I pray for what I want and need? My dad died anyway because it was God's will. My prayers have not been the same since he died."

If you have not yet experienced that kind of despair in your prayers, you likely will.<sup>37</sup> For some of you that moment is now.

So what did Sharon teach the children? Up until the night before she was not sure what to say. When the day came, she simply taught, through her tears, "I know that God hears and answers every prayer. He does not always give us the answer we want, and that really hurts. But I believe you will do better in your life by praying than by not praying. That is why I pray every day."

Acting on true principles, even when your heart says otherwise, takes true courage. And as a result, Sharon received a measure of healing that day through the grace of Jesus Christ. One of my favorite parts about being married to Sharon—and there are many—is to listen to her pray in faith for our children, extended family, and others in need. She knows how to talk to Heavenly Father.

As my friend Ty Mansfield has described in one of the stories profiled on the Church's website [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org), if we can just stay with God, trust Him, and keep doing the things that bring the Spirit into our lives, then light and healing can enter, even though at the moment things look dark and gloomy.<sup>38</sup> Whether the struggle is same-gender attraction, a crisis of faith, an addiction, or a deep sense of loneliness, just stay with God. Trust Him. There is light and love ahead (see D&C 50:23–25).<sup>39</sup> Again, if we can muster up the courage and take action, Christ provides the grace: courage + action + grace = healing.

By way of conclusion and testimony, I know that Jesus Christ is the great Healer. Over many years, in numerous settings, I have seen wounds of horrific abuse, long-standing addiction, loss that has shattered the soul, and heartache beyond description be

addressed, overcome, and resolved through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I know He is a real, living, loving God. I love and honor Him. I know His grace is sufficient—meaning big or powerful enough—to help us with all our problems. I know His promises to us are real and true. He can and will cleanse and heal us as He has said (see Ezekiel 36:25–28). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

1. Martin Luther King Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Warner Books, 2001), 42–43. This book was compiled thirty years after Martin Luther King Jr.'s death and is a beautiful representation of his words and thoughts.

2. See Ted Stewart, *The Mark of a Giant: Seven People Who Changed the World* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 2013). I very much enjoyed this book, and I strongly recommend it to those who like biographies.

3. King, *Autobiography*, 76–78.

4. Elaine S. Marshall, "Learning the Healer's Art," BYU devotional address, 8 October 2002; emphasis added.

5. Marshall, "Learning the Healer's Art."

6. Dallin H. Oaks, "He Heals the Heavy Laden," *Ensign*, November 2006, 7–8.

7. Richard Stengel, *Mandela's Way: Fifteen Lessons on Life, Love, and Courage* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 15.

8. Stengel, *Mandela's Way*, 14.

9. Stengel, *Mandela's Way*, 17. For other great references on the inspiring yet imperfect life of Nelson Mandela and the healing = courage + action + grace transfiguration of South Africa, I recommend John Carlin, *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), as well as Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), which is quite lengthy

but excellent. Sports enthusiasts will love ESPN's *30 for 30* episode from 2010 called "The 16th Man," a tremendous documentary on Mandela's role in the 1995 Rugby World Cup and its positive influence on South Africa.

10. M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 131; see also Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: Norton, 1975), 12.

11. William J. Doherty, *Soul Searching: Why Psychotherapy Must Promote Moral Responsibility* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 71.

12. C. Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden, 2010), 9.

13. For an excellent description of these self-defeating beliefs and how they bring misery, see page 106 of David D. Burns, *When Panic Attacks: The New, Drug-Free Anxiety Therapy That Can Change Your Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006):

**1. Performance Perfectionism.** *I must never fail or make a mistake.*

**2. Perceived Perfectionism.** *People won't love or accept me if I'm flawed or vulnerable.*

**3. Achievement Addiction.** *My worth as a human being depends on my achievements, intelligence, talent, status, income, or looks.*

This citation is listed in the reference list under depression and anxiety. We seem to specialize in these three self-defeating beliefs here at BYU, but all of us can change the way we see things to a healthier and more compassionate perspective.

14. Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 35–36. This beautiful little book is a must-read that I have assigned in many classes. I would also recommend the movie by the same title, starring Jack Lemmon and Hank Azaria and produced by Oprah Winfrey. It is wonderful. A quote from page 43 is also instructive:

*So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half-asleep, even when they're busy doing things they think are important. This is because they're chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.*

15. See Tyler J. Jarvis, "That's How the Light Gets In," BYU devotional address, 9 July 2013, and also Kristin L. Matthews, "The Worth of Souls Is Great," BYU devotional address, 6 August 2013; see also Jeffrey H. Larson, "What Do You Expect?: A Key to Personal Happiness," BYU devotional address, 14 July 2009.

16. Thomas S. Monson, "The Call for Courage," *Ensign*, May 2004, 55–56.

17. Marjorie Pay Hinckley, *Small and Simple Things* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 50.

18. For a delightful children's book on overcoming the dominant culture's view and on learning to trust how the Lord sees us, read Max Lucado, *You Are Special* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1997).

19. See David A. Bednar, "Watching with All Perseverance," *Ensign*, May 2010, 40–43. Elder David A. Bednar, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught on page 42 this principle (the importance of acting) repeatedly and with power:

*In the grand division of all of God's creations, there are "things to act and things to be acted upon" (2 Nephi 2:14). As children of our Heavenly Father, we have been blessed with the gift of moral agency, the capacity and power of independent action. Endowed with agency, we are agents, and we primarily are to act and not merely be acted upon.*

20. See Boyd K. Packer, "The Edge of the Light," *BYU Today*, March 1991, 22–24, 38–43; see also Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 184.

In his great BYU fireside address "The Edge of the Light," given on March 4, 1990, President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles described a moment (on pages 22–23) in which he learned the importance of acting in faith:

*Shortly after I was called as a General Authority, I went to Elder Harold B. Lee for counsel. He listened very carefully to my problem and suggested that I see President David O. McKay. President McKay counseled me as to the direction I should go. I was very willing to be obedient but saw no way possible for me to do as he counseled me to do.*

*I returned to Elder Lee and told him that I saw no way to move in the direction I was counseled to go. He said, “The trouble with you is you want to see the end from the beginning.” I replied that I would like to see at least a step or two ahead. Then came the lesson of a lifetime: “You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness; then the light will appear and show the way before you.”*

That, in essence, is the definition of acting in faith.

21. For an excellent book on the need to keep living and acting, the need to develop a wonderful life while living a single life, read Kristen McMains Oaks, *A Single Voice: The Unexpected Life Is No Less a Life* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008). This book has been very helpful for a number of young single adult sisters.

22. Over many years clients have told me again and again that the most helpful talk they have seen about pornography is James M. Harper, “Secret Shame: Isolation from Self,” a talk given at a BYU Cyber Secrets conference, Cyber Secrets: The Problem of Pornography, 18 February 2003, [youtube.com/watch?v=kzNKTOPVKZM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzNKTOPVKZM). This talk helps us understand that pornography is used as an escape from difficult or unpleasant emotional experiences. Most often pornography use is not an issue of hypersexuality, per se, but an issue of ineffective coping strategies for the difficulties of life. Most men I have worked with who look at pornography do it to cope because they do not have other healthy coping

skills. Unfortunately, the use turns into a cycle of shame and acting out, as described by Dr. Harper. Please listen to the talk if you want to understand more and begin to heal. Also, there are a number of very helpful Book of Mormon scriptures that describe the process of deliverance in which the Lord delivers His people from bondage. Pay close attention to your part in the process of deliverance (see Mosiah 7:33; Mosiah 29:19–20; 3 Nephi 4:30–33). You may wish to also look up all the scriptures in the Topical Guide under “deliver, deliverance.”

23. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 61 (end of chapter 13).

24. For a wonderful BYU devotional address on prayer, see Bruce D. Porter, “Did You Think to Pray?” 4 December 2012.

25. “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, 2002, no. 140.

26. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “prayer,” 753.

27. I have found Mary Jane Woodger’s article on mighty prayer to be very helpful in teaching me how to pray with more sincerity, directness, and power. It is entitled “What I Have Learned About Mighty Prayer,” *Ensign*, December 2006, 54–57. See also Richard G. Scott, “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 8–11.

28. Marcus Goodyear, “Mother Teresa, CEO: Doubt Is Not Despair If You Act,” 8 July 2011, retrieved from [patheos.com/blogs/takeandread/2011/07/mother-teresa-ceo-doubt-is-not-despair-if-you-act](http://patheos.com/blogs/takeandread/2011/07/mother-teresa-ceo-doubt-is-not-despair-if-you-act); emphasis in original.

For another excellent work on the inspiring life of Mother Teresa in her own words, see Mother Teresa, *A Simple Path*, comp. Lucinda Vardey (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995). You might also like Leo Maasburg, *Mother Teresa of Calcutta: A Personal Portrait*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011). Mother Teresa was also listed as one of seven giants in chapter 7 of Ted Stewart, *The Mark of a Giant*. Stewart’s chapter on Mother Teresa (pages 206–39) is an excellent description of her life.

29. When I was a sophomore at BYU in the early 1990s, Mrs. Rosa Parks visited campus to give a talk. I can tell you this: even as a young man with no real understanding of her place in history, I was overpowered by her presence and the greatness of her character. There was something electric in the air when she spoke. She was a small woman, advanced in age at the time, but she was powerful. It was a wonderful moment to be in her presence and to know that BYU had brought her to campus to share a message. I had no idea at that time how she would come to influence my life.

30. Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 68.

31. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “grace,” 697; emphasis added.

32. David A. Bednar, “In the Strength of the Lord,” BYU–Idaho devotional address, 8 January 2002.

33. I love this quote by Martin Luther King Jr. about the closeness we can feel to the Lord in the midst of struggles:

*In recent months I have also become more and more convinced of the reality of a personal God. . . . Perhaps the suffering, frustration and agonizing moments which I have had to undergo occasionally as a result of my involvement in a difficult struggle have drawn me closer to God. Whatever the cause, God has been profoundly real to me in recent months. In the midst of outer dangers I have felt an inner calm and known resources of strength that only God could give. In many instances I have felt the power of God transforming the fatigue of despair into the buoyancy of hope. [“Pilgrimage to Nonviolence” (1960), in *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 61; see also chapter 6 on Martin Luther King Jr. in Stewart, *Mark of a Giant*, 157–205]*

34. Thomas S. Monson, “First Presidency Message: Christmas Gifts, Christmas Blessings,” *Ensign*, December 1995, 4.

35. This principle was beautifully illustrated in C. Shane Reese, “On the Measurements We Make in Life,” BYU devotional address, 12 November 2013. In his talk Shane Reese described a difficult decision that weighed on the Reese family. Should he continue to teach at BYU or take his dream job as a statistician for an NFL football team? After much pondering, discussion, and prayer, Brother and Sister Reese decided to flip a coin. After the flip, the coin came to rest against a wall, directly on its side! He went on to describe:

*We laughed (and cried) together [and realized] we had work left to do, and the Lord was not going to allow us to miss out on a growth opportunity. We . . . had one of the most powerful weeks of our married lives together as a trip to the temple and additional fervent prayer and fasting helped us. . . . We had a sweet and precious learning experience that the Lord had in store for us—on His timescale.*

Can you see the Lord’s grace made manifest in allowing the Reese family to struggle a bit longer with a key decision? They found courage to act in faith, even amidst uncertainty, and the Lord’s grace was made manifest.

I have also found S. Michael Wilcox’s little book *When Your Prayers Seem Unanswered* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006) to be very helpful in explaining why the Lord sometimes waits until “the fourth watch” (Matthew 14:25) to come to us.

36. For a beautiful and touching example of faith, perseverance, and love during hard times, please take the time to read Dallan R. Moody, “What Happens When Life Gets One Degree Colder?” BYU devotional address, 6 March 2012.

In a similar way, *sometimes Christ’s grace is made manifest through trimming*. I have long been inspired, and troubled, by this verse in the New Testament: “Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2). Even if we are growing and doing well, the Lord will trim and prune us so we can bear even more fruit. Like it or

not, this is a manifestation of His grace and love. We worship a God who is involved in the details of our lives.

My favorite story regarding the importance of God trimming and pruning in our lives is that of President Hugh B. Brown and the currant bush in “God Is the Gardener,” BYU commencement address, 31 May 1968, 6–7, and in Hugh B. Brown, “The Currant Bush,” *New Era*, January 1973, 14–15. In the midst of tremendous confusion, disappointment, and sadness, Hugh B. Brown turned toward God rather than away. This is a story in which there is clear evidence of the Savior’s grace. The courage to act—in a way that moves us toward God and not away from Him—is a sure way to open the door to grace and subsequent healing.

37. A few thoughts on feeling abandoned: On the list of questions I have for the Lord, if and when I make it to heaven, is why experiencing a sense of abandonment is so important to our spiritual growth. Our Savior (see Matthew 27:46; D&C 133:50), Joseph Smith (see D&C 121 and 122), Mother Teresa (see Marcus Goodyear quote), and other good souls have described times in their lives when they felt abandoned by Heavenly Father. At least in Joseph Smith’s case, he was pretty angry about it (see D&C 121:1–3). I am not sure what the answer will be, but I do know this: if the Savior and other great and honorable people have gone through it, I can expect to as well.

As I have wrestled in and through my own moments of feeling forsaken, I have learned that my desire to live by true principles must be stronger than my particular emotional or spiritual state of the moment. As a client once told me in describing her childhood trauma of physical and sexual abuse, “I used to see myself as a victim, but I didn’t like that. I then saw myself as a survivor, but survivors have only made it through. I wanted more than that. I now see myself as a veteran, and I would like a monument placed in my honor.” Somewhere

on the road from victim (things happen to us outside of our control and against our will) to victor (we honorably struggled through a trial to emerge as better people) lies the thorny road of forsakenness.

I really like the insight provided by Elder David A. Bednar in “A Reservoir of Living Water,” CES fireside address, 4 February 2007, 5–6. This talk can bring understanding and peace in those moments when we feel abandoned. And the Richard G. Scott talk “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer” also speaks powerfully to this point.

38. The divine communication from the Lord saying “Stay with me” is described beautifully in “A Personal Experience: Ty’s Story” at [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org). I recommend this story because it powerfully describes a path of courage, action, and healing. I thank Ty for his ongoing strength and courage.

39. For an excellent talk on the love and grace of God in our lives, see Terence M. Vinson, “Drawing Closer to God,” *Ensign*, November 2013, 104–6.

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