

## *Safely on the Lord's Side*

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As a young boy (I still think of myself as young), I grew up on the east side of Provo. Surrounded by the mountains, Rock Canyon, the Provo River, and Utah Lake, I often heard stories about “the greatest lake ever”: Lake Powell. Friends, classmates, teachers, neighbors, and pretty much every person I knew would relate stories of water skiing, cliff jumping, houseboats, jet skis, sunshine, and good food. I wondered if I would ever have the chance to visit. The years passed by—junior high school, high school, a mission, college, graduate school—and still no opportunity came.

In the summer of 2001 the stars began to align. A trip was planned, and I was included! To ensure my attendance, I volunteered to drive and bring a couple of people with me. With much anticipation, my wife, Kimberly, and I, along with a couple of others, headed south for the six-hour drive to Wahweap Marina—getting started an hour later than we had planned. As we drove the long, straight drive approaching Wahweap, the red-rock cliffs and their beauty were apparent, enhanced by a beautiful sunset. It was hard to contain my excitement.

Arrangements had been made for Dave Rose, a colleague of mine on the basketball staff and a veteran boat operator, to pick us up at the dock and transport us to a houseboat located on the lake a few miles from the dock. As planned, he and his daughter Channell were waiting, and we loaded the boat. The sun had set, and the only light and sense of direction were from the brilliant moon in the sky. With some hesitation (veteran boat operators don't often show all of their concerns and fears) the boat was launched, and we headed for paradise.

Knowing the lake, Dave set a path toward the canyon where the houseboat was located, led only by the light of the moon. Within minutes of our departure it became apparent that a storm was upon us. Dark clouds covered the sky, the moonlight disappeared, and blinding rain and waves rocked the boat. I now understood Dave's hesitancy prior to our departure from the dock. The thought kept coming to my

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*Brian Santiago was senior associate athletic director at BYU when this devotional address was given on 11 June 2013.*

mind, “This is what Lake Powell is all about?” In that moment I was not that impressed.

Multiple prayers ensued as we pressed on, fighting the storm. Suddenly we slammed into a sandbar, seizing the engine! The waves pounded the boat, with each passing wave pressing us harder against the sand. Dave yelled for his daughter to jump out onto the sand to push us back into the raging waters. Her strength, to this day, is an inspiration and a miracle. She successfully pushed us against the waves and current back into the lake. The engine started, and we pressed on toward the houseboat. Fear stricken, we prayed for calm waters so we could arrive at our destination safely. Within minutes the storm blew on, the moon reappeared, and Dave was able to deliver us safely, albeit wet, freezing cold, scared, and wide eyed—and still wondering what the buzz of Lake Powell was all about.

The next morning I awoke to one of most breathtaking places on planet earth: crystal clear water surrounded by red-rock cliffs, pure sand, and a perfect blue sky with abundant sunshine. A place that in my opinion could be added to the seven natural wonders of the world, Lake Powell was better than I had expected.

That experience has proven to be a metaphor for our journey through life. We must pass and press forward through the storms of life to find the calm, reassuring peace that comes from being safely on the Lord’s side. My experience at Lake Powell brings to mind the words of one of my favorite hymns, “Master, the Tempest Is Raging”:

*Master, the tempest is raging!  
The billows are tossing high!  
The sky is o’ershadowed with blackness.  
No shelter or help is nigh.  
Carest thou not that we perish?  
How canst thou lie asleep  
When each moment so madly is threat’ning  
A grave in the angry deep?*

*Master, with anguish of spirit  
I bow in my grief today.  
The depths of my sad heart are troubled.  
Oh, waken and save, I pray!  
Torrents of sin and of anguish  
Sweep o’er my sinking soul,  
And I perish! I perish! dear Master.  
Oh, hasten and take control!*

*(Chorus)  
The winds and the waves shall obey thy will:  
Peace, be still.  
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea  
Or demons or men or whatever it be,  
No waters can swallow the ship where lies  
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.  
They all shall sweetly obey thy will:  
Peace, be still; peace, be still.  
They all shall sweetly obey thy will:  
Peace, peace, be still.*

*Master, the terror is over.  
The elements sweetly rest.  
Earth’s sun in the calm lake is mirrored,  
And heaven’s within my breast.  
Linger, O blessed Redeemer!  
Leave me alone no more,  
And with joy I shall make the blest harbor  
And rest on the blissful shore.  
[“Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Hymns*, 2002,  
no. 105]*

We have a choice to make as we navigate life and the path back to a loving Heavenly Father who longs for our return.

In the Book of Mormon, Alma taught, “Therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God” (Alma 12:24). Our choice is whether or not we want to be safely on the Lord’s side. Every one of us faces adversity, trials, and the storms of life. Today I want to propose three areas that can help deliver us back into the outstretched arms of the Savior:

1. Being at peace with God through our personal integrity
2. Following the promptings of the Holy Ghost
3. Perseverance

### Personal Integrity

It has been my experience in life that there are few feelings that rival being at peace with the Savior, which comes as a result of our willingness to be totally honest with Him. A recent story shared in general conference by Sister Ann M. Dibb illustrates this point:

*A man . . . went one evening to steal corn from a neighbor's field. He took his little boy with him to sit on the fence and keep a look-out, so as to give warning in case any one should come along. The man jumped over the fence with a large bag on his arm, and before commencing to take the corn he looked all around, first one way and then the other, and not seeing any person, he was just about to fill his bag. Then the little fellow, his son, . . . cried out:*

*"Father, there is one way you haven't looked yet! . . .*

*". . . You forgot to look up." ["Forgot to Look Up," Salmagundi, *Scott's Monthly Magazine* 4, no. 6 (December 1867): 953; quoted in Dibb, "I Believe in Being Honest and True," *Ensign*, May 2011, 116]*

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, "Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart" (D&C 6:16).

The adversary teaches us to hide, and when we make mistakes it is our human nature to hide! Who are we hiding from? We win when we are honest with our fellowmen, ourselves, and God. An experience we had while hiring one of our head coaches in the Athletic Department illustrates this point. With permission from Carrie Summerhays Roberts, I share this experience.

Our athletic director, Tom Holmoe, and I had completed the interviews with our final two candidates for the position of head women's golf coach. We had two excellent and very well-qualified candidates who were both passionate about getting the job. It seemed like we could not go wrong with either choice, but we had a tough decision to make in determining who was the best fit.

We searched for something to differentiate the two and kept coming up empty, until a meeting with Carrie provided the answer.

Carrie and I met in my office, where we again discussed in detail the job responsibilities, answered her questions, and then proceeded to finish the meeting. As she started to leave my office, she turned around and told me she needed to share something personal with me. She proceeded to tell me that she wanted to be totally honest with me, against the recommendation of many who had advised her not to tell for fear it may cost her the job. She then told me that she was expecting a child. I responded by telling her how much I appreciated her being honest and straightforward, because it was crucial for us to plan summer recruiting and prepare for the fall season. She left my office certainly at peace that she had been totally honest but also wondering if that disclosure of information had just cost her a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

After she disappeared down the hallway, I walked to Tom's office, knocked on the door, and expressed to him that we had found our coach. She had just provided us the reassurance that we would not have to worry about how she would lead the golf program. Her demonstration of integrity made all the difference in the world, and shortly thereafter she was offered the job, which she accepted. I am reminded of a quote from Elder Tad R. Callister's devotional address:

*May the integrity of our souls have a sign that reads in bold, black letters "NOT FOR SALE AT*

ANY PRICE” so that it might be said of us, as it was of Hyrum Smith, “Blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart” [D&C 124:15].

Elder Callister continued:

*May we all become men and women of integrity—not because we have to but because we want to. The Lord announced the reward for those who do so: “Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest . . . and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice . . . they are accepted of me” [D&C 97:8]. [“Becoming Men and Women of Integrity,” BYU devotional address, 6 December 2011; emphasis in original]*

#### **Following the Promptings of the Holy Ghost**

Living our lives with integrity before the Lord allows us to stand with confidence and provides an avenue for the Holy Ghost to lead and guide us through our lives.

The Savior gave us this promise:

*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . .*

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* [John 14:16–18; 26]

What an incredible promise and blessing to live our lives with the promise of having the Holy Ghost *with us!* Since I am sure many of you have had experiences with the promptings of the Holy Ghost leading you away

from danger to safety, I would like to share a personal one with you.

A few years ago I was excited to attend the NCAA Track and Field Championships with our men’s and women’s track teams. I had been newly assigned to oversee the programs and looked forward to watching our teams and individual student athletes compete for a national championship at Sacramento State University. I arrived in Sacramento, California, where a staff member picked me up at the airport and shuttled me to the Marriott Courtyard next to the UC Davis Medical Center.

After unpacking I went with members of the team over to the track and watched an outstanding day of competition. After spending ten-plus hours at the track with little to eat, I was anxious to return to the hotel in hopes of finding some dinner. It was late—pushing 10:00 p.m.—but I was determined. I walked outside, and, assuming I was in a safe area, started to walk, looking for any sign of nourishment. I came to the main road, and, as I looked to my left, there seemed to be some possibilities about a mile down the road. Without paying much attention, I started walking toward the lights.

After a few moments and with still a ways to go, I realized I was in a rough neighborhood and in danger. I was prompted to look behind me, and it became apparent I was being followed. I said a little prayer as I started to walk with extra pace. I had the thought to pull out my phone and to begin speaking loudly, hoping that would distract the two guys following me. I crossed the street on an angle, and while I was relieved that the two trailing me didn’t cross the street, I looked ahead to see two more men walking toward me. I again raised the phone, spoke loudly, and passed by the men. They stopped and looked me over, but I was not interested to ask them what they thought.

Sheer panic had all but set in as I started a light jog toward the lights and what seemed

to be a shopping center. I ran into the parking lot of the shopping center, and for some reason I wasn't hungry anymore. Scared to death, I spotted a police car parked next to the entrance of the shopping center. I approached the vehicle, and the officer was somewhat alarmed to see me coming toward him. He cracked his window as I motioned to him. I told him I was from out of town and was looking for something to eat but felt I was unsafe. He asked me where I had come from. I told him I was staying at the Marriott Courtyard at the UC Davis Medical Center. He asked me how I had gotten to the shopping center. When I told him I had walked, he told me to get in the back of his vehicle immediately. I didn't hesitate.

He told me I was lucky to be alive and was surprised that I had made it unharmed. I explained to him that I was being followed and had walked head-on into a couple of others. He asked me if they said anything to me. I explained that they had stopped and looked me up and down but that I was acting as if I was on the phone and lived close by. He said it had saved my life and the outcome could have been disastrous. Needless to say, I have never been so grateful to be dropped off at a hotel in the back of a police car—no matter how it looked to those who saw me.

It is alarming how quickly our lives can change because of the decisions we make. Every day each one of us makes choices that will determine our destiny. Simple decisions that seem insignificant at the time can have lasting effects. It is imperative that we have the companionship of the Holy Ghost to help us stay on the path of righteousness.

The Savior taught us in a revelation given in Doctrine and Covenants 11:

*And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.*

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;*

*And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive. [D&C 11:12–14]*

In 1979 Elder F. Enzio Busche shared the following:

*It takes courage and commitment to follow the promptings of the Spirit because they may frighten us as they lead us to walk along new paths, sometimes paths that no one has walked before, paths of the second mile, of acting totally differently from how worldly people act. For instance, we may be prompted to smile when someone offends us, to give love where others give hate, to say thank you where others would not find anything to be thankful for, to accept jobs that others would be too proud to do, to apologize where others would defend themselves, and to do all the seemingly crazy things that the Spirit prompts a righteous, honest, listening heart to do. ["The Message: The Only Real Treasure," *New Era*, December 1979, 5]*

### **Perseverance**

President James E. Faust said, "Perseverance is demonstrated by those who keep going when the going gets tough, who don't give up even when others say, 'It can't be done'" ("Perseverance," *Ensign*, May 2005, 51).

Those words are music to my ears, because I believe that to be successful we have to be willing to do what others are unwilling to do. Above the door in my office there is a wooden plaque that my college basketball coach sent to me with the following letters: FAW NLU. It is my daily reminder to Find a Way and Never Let Up. Whether it be a small, menial task or life's biggest challenge, there is always a way to accomplish, overcome, and persevere. With the Lord at our side, we must carry on.

In late August 2010, after a long Sunday as a new bishop, I was sitting on the couch at my parents' home when news of a Mormon bishop tragically killed in Visalia, California, came across the television. Alarmed, I called out to my wife, and, to our shock and dismay, it was Clay Sannar, the brother of a close family friend. The ensuing weeks and months were difficult as family and friends rallied around Clay's wife, Julie, and their six sons. The BYU football team reached out and invited Julie and her boys to be part of their Thursday's Hero program to give them a day to remember. The team encircled the family, lifted them onto their shoulders, showered them with gifts, and boosted their spirits. It was an inspired effort to help a broken-hearted family persevere through tragedy.

A little over a year later I was on the phone with Julie. I asked her how she was doing, and her response has been an inspiration to me and to others as she carries on: "I don't know how I'm doing, but I keep rowing my boat." As Julie taught me that day, I believe the Lord will take the other oar and help us row as we navigate our path safely on the Lord's side.

Each one of us has the opportunity to join a winning team by being full of integrity, following the promptings of the Holy Ghost, and persevering through the rough waters of life. I am grateful for the Savior and testify that He lives! He knows each one of us personally and is anxiously waiting to see if we will accept His promise:

*Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. [D&C 88:63]*

*For I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up. [D&C 84:88]*

I pray that each one of us can find peace and comfort in knowing that the Savior of the world will help us row our boats into His outstretched arms, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.