

# *How to Have Joy and Fulfillment*

JOSÉ A. TEIXEIRA

**I**n my last general conference talk, entitled “Seeking the Lord,” I spoke of the importance of making inspired decisions in the online world in which we live today. As I referred to the use of technology and, in particular, the use of cellphones, I said that “life is not confined to a four-inch screen” (José A. Teixeira, *Ensign*, May 2015). I just want you to know that since then I have upgraded to a six-and-a-half-inch screen. Nonetheless, the statement remains true: Life is not confined to a screen, no matter the size.

It is good to be here with you this morning. I will not talk about technology today. Rather, I hope to share a few lessons and principles that will help you find joy and fulfillment in life through making inspired decisions and setting wise priorities.

Sister Teixeira and I were both born in Portugal, though she spent her childhood in Africa. I will come back to that part of the story a little later. Portugal is a country founded in AD 868 with a rich history and culture; it is situated in the westernmost part of Europe.

We have lived almost all of our married life outside of Portugal though—primarily in Germany, France, and Switzerland—because of my professional career before I was called to

full-time service in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Our three children—the youngest of whom is here with us today—were born in Portugal, Germany, and France. They studied in Switzerland, Germany, Brazil (while we served a mission in São Paulo), Portugal, England, and the United States. Our two boys served missions—one in Tokyo, Japan, and the other in New York City.

After this very brief introduction, you may be saying, “Wow! That is a lot of places and a lot of change.” Indeed!

I am sure you can imagine that as we lived in all of these countries, we were faced with many decisions and choices—what we needed to do, which direction we should go, and how we should set priorities in order to find joy and fulfillment both individually and as a family. The same will be true for each of you. In your own unique way, you will undoubtedly have to make decisions and choices and set priorities that will shape your life.

---

*José A. Teixeira, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, delivered this devotional on November 6, 2018.*

Part of the impression I want to leave with you today is that making inspired decisions and setting wise priorities is a matter to be considered at all stages of your life, particularly at the stage you are in now. Your priorities of today will be your joy and fulfillment of tomorrow.

Some additional context might be useful to illustrate what I am trying to share with you.

### **Remember the Greatest Priority**

Let me start by talking about my own country. The location of Portugal on the Atlantic Ocean has influenced many aspects of its culture and its people's way of living: Portuguese people have turned to the sea over hundreds of years to find prosperity and wellness. Prince Henry the Navigator, the fourth child of the Portuguese king John I, founded a state-of-the-art navigation school in the 1400s. He was responsible for the early development of the Portuguese exploration and maritime trade with other continents. This began with Africa, continued with the first substantial exploration of the northeast coast of South America, and culminated with Vasco da Gama's discovery of a sea route to India. Prince Henry was a key figure in the early days of the Portuguese Empire.

A 164-foot compass rose adorns the square in front of the Monument to the Discoveries in Lisbon, Portugal. This site is dedicated to the explorers who opened the main routes of the Portuguese expansion during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

This era caused many Portuguese people in subsequent generations to connect with new parts of the world. For example, in 1909, the Portuguese king D. Manuel II appointed by royal decree the grandmother of Sister Teixeira as a teacher of the Portuguese language in Angola—then an African colony of Portugal that had been founded in 1575.

Sister Teixeira's father, Arnaldo Teles Grilo, graduated from the University of Lisbon in Portugal as an engineer. He began his career with the National Agency of Agriculture and later went to Angola, where he became a successful executive in a Portuguese bank and led its operations there.

As a result, Sister Teixeira spent a great part of her childhood in Africa.

Life in Africa was wonderful for her and was full of joyful experiences. She had the love of immediate and extended family around her and all the comforts that life can provide—until, suddenly, a war emerged. Her family found themselves in the midst of an unstoppable conflict that ultimately compelled them to return to Portugal and leave behind all of their abundant possessions.

Despite the confusion and turmoil generated by a war that gradually consumed all peace and stability during their last months in Africa, Teles Grilo helped a friend escape the war by giving him a reliable car that he had recently purchased at the Mercedes Benz factory in Stuttgart, Germany (see José A. Teixeira, "Facing the Future with Hope," *Ensign*, July 2012).

Ironically, of all the possessions that Teles Grilo and his family had acquired and left behind in Angola—including homes, art pieces, and one of the largest private collections of books in that country—the only possession that was returned to him back in Portugal was the one he had given to someone in need. Yes, his friend shipped the Mercedes Benz back to Portugal from South Africa with a note of thanks, saying that Teles Grilo's love and compassion had saved his life and the life of his mother.

Sister Teixeira and her family returned to Portugal after this tragic war to find what would become one of their most precious blessings: the missionaries began to teach them the message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The teachings of the plan of salvation made an impression on Sister Teixeira and her family. They had many other priorities at that time, including reorganizing their lives after the recent tragic events, yet they decided that their greatest priority was to do those things that would enable them to return to their Heavenly Father. They were baptized, and later they traveled to Switzerland to be sealed in the temple.

So here is the first lesson I want to share with you: Our most important priority will always be

to do those things that will enable us to return to our Heavenly Father.

### **Do What You Know Is Right**

I grew up in the city of Coimbra, a preserved medieval riverfront city in central Portugal that has been the home of the historic Coimbra University since 1537. It is one of the oldest universities in continuous operation in the world—and certainly the oldest in Portugal—and is one of the country's largest institutions of higher education and research.

Built on the grounds of a former palace, the university is famed, among many things, for its baroque library and its bell tower, and it is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List.

When I was a boy, my father worked at the university and we lived next to the campus. I spent much of my free time playing on the grounds of this incredible and fascinating place. Its walls, doors, classrooms, plazas, and libraries are witnesses to hundreds of years of learning, discovery, and tradition.

In the summertime, during school break, I was allowed to access the library of the Faculty of Arts, and it became a tradition for me to go to the library to read good books. In fact, I discovered that the library had the entire collection of my beloved *Asterix*, *Lucky Luke*, and *Tintin* comic books.

Close to the university lies a twelfth-century Romanesque cathedral. During my youth I walked through the cloisters of that structure on an almost weekly basis. There I followed hundreds of years of tradition and obtained the religious education then available to me.

When I was sixteen years old, my family and I met the missionaries and began to learn about the message of the Restoration. Our desire to join the Church was met with fierce opposition from close friends.

The message of the Restoration and the plan of salvation changed our perspective of life, and we all decided to be baptized. Later we too traveled to the Swiss temple to be sealed as a family, in spite of the persistent opposition of others.

So here is the second lesson I want to share with you: Popular views or the conduct of others should not deter nor constrain us from doing what we know is right. Our choice to believe in Christ and the priorities we set to live according to His teachings are central to a life replete with joy and fulfillment.

### **The Bird and the Traveling Man**

The fable of the bird and the traveling man contains the final lesson I want to share with you today.

A bird was flying looking for food when he saw a man walking on a path with a box of fresh worms. The bird thought to himself, "I could talk to him and ask for one of those worms." Resolutely, he flew closer to the traveling man and asked the question, "Could you give me one of your fresh worms?"

The traveling man replied, "Yes, but with one condition."

"What condition?" asked the bird.

"I will give you one of my fresh worms if you will give me one of your feathers."

The bird thought to himself, "This is a good deal. I have many feathers, and this fresh worm seems so delicious." He reached underneath his left wing and took a tiny feather. "Ouch"—a small pain, but soon forgotten with a free meal.

The next day the bird was looking for his nourishment as he usually did every day, and what happened? The traveling man showed up again with a box of fresh worms. The bird, without much thinking, decided, "I am going to talk to him and ask him for another worm." He flew closer to the traveling man and asked, "Could you give me another worm?"

The man replied, "You know the condition. I will give you a worm if you give me one of your feathers."

"Sure, one more feather will not make a difference," rationalized the bird. He reached this time under his right wing and pulled a feather. "Ouch!" It hurt again, but with a delicious free worm, that pain was soon forgotten.

Well, the fable continued. Every day there was an encounter between the bird and the traveling man, and at each of these encounters a worm, a feather, a worm, a feather, a worm, a feather!

Unfortunately, the fable does not have a happy ending. What do you think—do birds need feathers to fly? Yes, a bird is designed to fly and birds' feathers are essential for flight.

In the last encounter with the traveling man, the bird traded his last feather, but this time he became a prisoner of the traveling man. (See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], 214–15.)

Figuratively speaking, do we have feathers as well? Spiritual feathers are also essential for our spiritual well-being. The things we believe to be true are the precious feathers that will allow us to reach our divine potential.

If flight feathers are damaged or lost, a bird cannot fly. Likewise, if we trade our beliefs for worldly pleasures, we jeopardize our capacity to “fly.”

Jesus taught, “Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; compare Matthew 6:33; see Dallin H. Oaks, “Focus and Priorities,” *Ensign*, May 2001).

From this very pulpit, President Russell M. Nelson, our dear prophet, said, speaking of our Heavenly Father, “He cares that you have the obedience and self-discipline needed to maintain your identity and honor your highest priorities” (“Identity, Priority, and Blessings,” BYU fireside address, 10 September 2000).

The way you use your time reflects your priorities. Remember, where your heart is, there is your treasure also (see Matthew 6:21). The things you spend time on are the things you value the most.

### Lessons in Joy and Fulfillment

I know that you want to have joy and fulfillment in life. Remember these lessons of today and you will be more likely to have that joy and fulfillment in both good and challenging times.

So let's review these three lessons once again:

1. Your first great priority is to do those things that will enable you to return to your Heavenly Father.
2. Popular views or the conduct of others should not deter nor constrain you from doing what you know is right.
3. Keep all your feathers so you can fly.

Keep the commandments of God. When we love God and put Him first in our lives, everything else falls into place. When we extend that love to those around us, we find joy and fulfillment.

I bear my testimony to you—my humble testimony—that Heavenly Father wants to bless you with joy. And as you follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and the words of His prophets, you will be guided to a joyful life. I testify that as we deepen our understanding of the Savior, we will have an increased desire to live joyfully and we will have a conviction that joy is possible. I bear this testimony and I give my invitation to all of you to keep your feathers and to live the commandments of God. And I promise you that you will have a joyful life. And I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.