

The Allegory of the Wedding Cake

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I have entitled my remarks “The Allegory of the Wedding Cake.” Once upon a time there were two young ladies. They were BYU students. They were friends and roommates. One day these two young ladies were asked by their other roommate to make her wedding cake.

“Quite a daunting request,” they thought. Everyone knows, after all, that wedding cakes can be challenging. You have to have the right ingredients. You have to know how to follow a recipe. You have to know how to keep the baked cake from crumbling into pieces when transporting it from the pan to the cake platform. You have to know how to properly assemble and support each tier of the cake so that it will not collapse. You have to know how to ice the cake so that it will have a beautiful, smooth surface. You have to know how to make the decorating icing the correct consistency so that it is not too stiff or too flimsy. It has to be just right. You also have to know how to use the different cake decorating tips to make different designs. Despite all these challenges, once you have correctly baked, assembled, iced, and decorated your cake, it is a very rewarding experience. Let us pick up the story from there. [A video was shown; see [youtube.com/watch?v=9BSDKbI5Ixg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BSDKbI5Ixg).]

These two young ladies faced their challenge quite admirably. They were prepared to make the cake. They had taken the class that gave them experience and skill. They had a tried-and-true cake recipe from Grandma. They had all the right ingredients. But, most important, they had the courage and faith in themselves that they could accomplish the task. So they moved forward. And even when they were distracted and things went topsy-turvy, they had the proper perspective. They did not become discouraged but made the best of the situation.

At times your life, including your life at BYU, will be like making a wedding cake. You will have many opportunities to take the things that you have learned and act upon them. You will be prepared to act. You will have the knowledge and training you need to succeed. You will have the right ingredients. But there will be no guarantee that you will succeed. In such moments you will have to decide for yourself whether you will proceed with faith or be brought to a standstill by a fear of failure. Being

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able to proceed when the specific outcome is not assured is one of the great tests of life.

I have a friend who received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from BYU. She has used her education, talents, and skills in her profession. And she has been successful. However, she has felt the need to enhance her life. She is interested in a variety of things, but one of the things that interests her the most is the law. She is considering going to law school. I believe she would do very well. All she needs to do is study for the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) and take the exam. (It is easy for me to stand here and say that is all she needs to do because I am not the one studying for or taking the LSAT.) Except for that, she is prepared to go to law school and is qualified to do so. She only needs to apply.

I asked her one day how her pursuit of law school was going, and she told me that she had decided not to go to law school after all. I asked her why, and she told me that she had been praying about it and had not received an answer. But that does not mean she should not proceed. Elder Richard G. Scott said this about receiving answers to our prayers:

[God] will reply in one of **three** ways. First, you can feel the peace, comfort, and assurance that confirm that your decision is right. Or second, you can sense that unsettled feeling, the stupor of thought, indicating that your choice is wrong. Or third—and this is the difficult one—you can feel no response. [“Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2007; emphasis in original]

My friend was experiencing the third reply. After some thought she determined that she would take a leap of faith and continue on with her plan of taking the LSAT and see how she felt afterward. Maybe her score on the LSAT would be the answer. Just like those who were making the wedding cake, she has all the ingredients—all she needs to do is act and put her trust in Heavenly Father.

Sometimes we may hesitate to move forward even after we have prayed. Perhaps we have not received the answer to our prayers that we thought we should have. We may begin to question and ask ourselves, “What if it is not the right thing to do?” or “What if it doesn’t work out?” Elder Scott gave this counsel:

What do you do when you have prepared carefully, have prayed fervently, waited a reasonable time for a response, and still do not feel an answer? You may want to express thanks when that occurs, for it is an evidence of [God’s] trust. When you are living worthily and your choice is consistent with the Savior’s teachings and you need to act, proceed with trust. As you are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit, one of two things will certainly occur at the appropriate time: either the stupor of thought will come, indicating an improper choice, or the peace or the burning in the bosom will be felt, confirming that your choice was correct. When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision. [“Supernal Gift”]

After we have made the decision to act and proceed in faith—knowing that we have taken all the right steps—and after we have carefully followed the recipe that we have been given, then we need to move forward and enjoy the process without too much concern for the specific ultimate outcome. Things may occasionally turn out upside down or topsy-turvy—as they did with the wedding cake—but with the proper perspective we can enjoy the sense of accomplishment that comes from moving forward with faith.

Speaking of the need to move forward even in the face of uncertainty, President Thomas S. Monson has observed:

[We must be] *explorers in spirit. . . . The spirit of exploration . . . includes developing the capacity to face trouble with courage;*

disappointment with cheerfulness; and triumph with humility.

God left the world unfinished for man to work his skill upon. He left the electricity in the cloud, the oil in the earth. He left the rivers unbridged and the forests unfelled and the cities unbuilt. God gives to man the challenge of raw materials, not the ease of finished things. He leaves the pictures unpainted and the music unsung and the problems unsolved, that man might know the joys and glories of creation. ["First Presidency Message: In Quest of the Abundant Life," *Ensign*, March 1988]

God gives each of us opportunities to create so that we can learn to take joy in that celestial process. Sometimes the result will not be what we have expected, but the process itself is important. One reason I like to think of opportunities as wedding-cake opportunities is that even though making a wedding cake can be

challenging, the truth is that even though it is often used as the centerpiece of a wedding reception and will be seen by the guests at the reception, the cake really isn't the important thing. The happiness of the couple being married is the most important thing. And the happiness of the couple does not depend on a wedding cake. Similarly, when we decide to act in the face of uncertainty, to take the leap of faith and make the cake, the cake is not what is important. It is the fact that we had the courage and faith to make the cake in the first place that matters. It is the growth that is important.

I hope each of you will recognize the wedding-cake opportunities that present themselves to you this year. I promise that as you move forward in faith in those moments, your life will be greatly blessed in ways you may not have fully anticipated. May it be so is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.