

Preparing for Life's Unexpected Storms

PEGGY S. WORTHEN

Welcome to fall semester 2021. What a challenging year it has been! But here we are, enthusiastically ready to face the future—come what may.

When I was growing up, one of my family's favorite things to do was camp at Flaming Gorge and go rafting on the Green River below the Flaming Gorge Dam. In our preparations to float the river, it was necessary to take the raft to the boat launch just below the dam and unload the raft and all the equipment needed to float the river—such as oars, life jackets, and other essential items. Then my parents would drive separate vehicles to the Little Hole Boat Launch—the destination of our rafting trip—leave one of the vehicles there, and drive the other vehicle back to the launch point.

On one of these pleasant mornings, when I was about thirteen, my younger sister and I were left to tend the raft and the equipment while my parents drove to Little Hole. As my sister and I sat visiting on the edge of the raft facing the water's

edge, we were abruptly thrown from the raft into the river along with all of our equipment. A very strong gust of wind had suddenly blown down the canyon wall, lifting the side of our raft and flipping it up over our heads.

The raft continued to flip with an acrobatic-like motion, tumbling side over side several times, barely touching the river with each rotation, until it finally made landfall, coming to rest on the other side of the river. Not only had the raft been emptied of its contents, including my sister and me, but in its escape across the river, it forcibly struck a young man who was standing on the edge of the nearby jetty, pummeling him into the fastest current of the river.

My sister and I instinctively and, I might add, frantically began grabbing our equipment from the water, trying to retrieve it before it entered the fastest current of the river. We managed to retrieve everything except for one of the oars.

My sister and I were in a state of disbelief! There we were—traumatized, sopping wet, and sobbing

Peggy S. Worthen, wife of BYU president Kevin J. Worthen, delivered this devotional address on September 7, 2021.

with the pile of our equipment but without our raft. It was now on the other side of the river! Things had happened so fast. To make things even more confusing, none of the other people waiting to launch their rafts that morning seemed to have been affected at all by the gust of wind.

My sister and I paced back and forth not far from our equipment in a state of shock and emotional distress, worrying about a lot of things. First of all, we wondered how we were going to explain this to our parents upon their return and why only our raft had been affected by the wind. Most important, we were fretting about the condition of the young man who had been knocked into the river by our errant raft.

Amid the chaos, there were many kind people who tried to comfort and console my sister and me. I remember one nice lady who kept saying, “Don’t worry, your parents will understand.” I had my doubts.

But it turned out that she was right—my parents did understand. Not only did they understand, but they focused only on expressing relief that we were safe.

After my parents had arrived and had assured us that everything would be okay, it wasn’t long before we were on our way down the river in our raft. Some very helpful people had assisted my parents in rescuing our raft. Even the Boy Scouts had gotten involved. Remember the oar that had gotten away? The Scouts were able to retrieve the oar from the river, and they relayed the message back to us that we could swing by their camp when we were finished with our river trip and pick it up. Since my sister and I were tweens, the news that we would be going to the Boy Scout camp to reclaim our oar lifted our dampened spirits.

Before we began our journey down the river, my sister and I were also relieved to see that the young man who had been knocked into the river had made it safely to shore. He was soaking wet, but he was safe.

I have reflected upon this incident from time to time throughout my life. We had found ourselves quite literally up the creek without a paddle—or even a raft. Although the situation had a happy ending, it reminds me of the many unexpected challenges that inevitably occur in all of our lives.

The thought of the unexpected can be frightening and, at times, debilitating. Nevertheless, the Savior has commanded us to not be afraid, even when the unexpected storms of life are raging around us. This commandment is often easier to articulate than to implement. But, fortunately, the Savior has also promised us that “if ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). So what can we do to prepare for life’s unexpected storms that will most certainly come—some even this semester?

Elder Ronald A. Rasband recently provided a road map to help us through these unexpected storms, counseling us to “take heart.” He said, “Yes, we live in perilous times, but as we stay on the covenant path, we need not fear.” He also said:

The Lord is with us, mindful of us and blessing us in ways only He can do. Prayer can call down the strength and the revelation that we need to center our thoughts on Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. The Lord knew that at times we would feel fear . . . , which is why the scriptures are replete with the Lord’s counsel:

“Be of good cheer, and do not fear.”

*“Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.” [“Be Not Troubled,” *Ensign*, November 2018; quoting Doctrine and Covenants 68:6; 6:36]*

Elder Rasband’s counsel and my experience with the windblown raft illustrate two things we can do to help us prepare for and deal with unexpected challenges.

First, as Elder Rasband noted, we can prepare by praying always, even amid an unexpected challenge—*especially* during an unexpected challenge—such as during a difficult conversation or when attempting to quickly gather our possessions and thoughts from a river of fast-moving circumstances. Praying always doesn’t mean that we have to stop mid-circumstance and take on a prayerful posture. Sometimes events happen so quickly that that is not possible. Kneeling in the middle of a swift, moving river is not safety approved. Praying always does not mean that we always have our eyes closed and our arms crossed; it means that we keep ourselves constantly prepared by staying in tune with our Heavenly Father.

Second, we can prepare by acknowledging that in times of uncertainty we will need help—sometimes from others and always from Heavenly Father. On some occasions, such as when a microburst suddenly upends your life, you will find that God has already placed people around you to meet your needs. They may not be Boy Scouts who can grab an oar or a kind woman who can provide calming reassurance, but we should be aware that there are many around us who would love to help us and whom the Lord has provided to aid us.

The scriptures are filled with examples of people who sought the resources the Lord made available to them in trying times. Such was the case when the Lamanite armies took captive some of the people from the city of Ammonihah. Zoram, the chief captain over the armies of the Nephites, went to Alma, the high priest over the Church, to ask him “whither the Lord would that they should go into the wilderness in search of their brethren, who had been taken captive by the Lamanites” (Alma 16:5; see also verses 3–6). Likewise, to defend the Nephites against the

Lamanites in a later battle, Moroni sent messengers to the prophet to “inquire of the Lord whither the armies of the Nephites should go to defend themselves against the Lamanites” (Alma 43:23; see also chapter 43). None of these people were afraid to ask for help. Their lives depended on it.

We may not always be facing a life-or-death situation, but we should never be afraid to ask for help from the plentiful resources that are available to us in times of uncertainty. And, most certainly, we should never shy away from asking our Savior for help.

It is my prayer that, during this time of uncertainty, you will not be afraid of the challenges that are inevitable. Prepare yourselves by endeavoring to stay on the covenant path. Remember to pray always in order to stay in tune with our Heavenly Father, who is mindful of each one of us and who wants us to be happy and successful. Also remember that you are not alone in your journey. So be prepared to ask for help—we need Heavenly Father and each other. May you feel His love for you throughout this coming year is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.