

Bring Healing Light into Your Life

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While attending BYU during my freshman year, I took a larger class load than maybe I should have. That semester my midterms happened to all line up in the same week. I remember attending a general education class in a large lecture hall in the Benson Building with hundreds of other students. Knowing he was giving a midterm that week, the professor started class by asking everyone to stand up if they had at least two midterms that week. Most of the class stood. He then asked who had at least three midterms, and many people sat down. By the time he got to six midterms, I was the only person in the room left standing. The professor pointed at me and said to the rest of the class, “See, no matter how bad your week is, her life is worse.”

I believe the professor meant to comfort everyone in that class, but I am not sure he had fully thought out how the last person left standing was going to feel.

At that moment I felt so pressured and overwhelmed, wondering if I was good enough to be

here at BYU. I know I am not the only person who has had that feeling. As President C. Shane Reese boldly emphasized:

We proudly and energetically embrace our charge from prophets and apostles to “dare to be different” and to “become the BYU of prophecy.” Our students and programs consistently rank among the most competitive in the nation.¹

With prestige also come the pressures and self-expectations that push us to be our very best. In some situations it can also cause us to doubt if we are enough.

So how do we overcome the inadequacy we all feel at times in our lives? When life is so busy, demanding, and overwhelming, how can we find peace and purpose? How do we see God in our lives even in the darkest moments?

Today I want to speak to those who are feeling burdened or overwhelmed and share a message about the healing light that can help us find peace

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and purpose during challenges. I will discuss how finding this light requires being willing to work, recognizing miracles, and serving others.

Miracles Often Require Work

The first principle I want to share is that miracles often take work and patience. Elder M. Russell Ballard taught that we must do more than pray—we must act in faith. He said:

*Praying for justice, peace, the poor, and the sick is often not enough. After we kneel in prayer, we need to get up from our knees and do what we can to help—to help both ourselves and others.*²

To illustrate this principle, I want to share a series of miracles that happened in one of our campus research labs.

A group of BYU physics students had the opportunity to run an acoustical experiment during the launch of NASA's Artemis I, which is the biggest rocket ever sent into orbit. The process involved setting up microphones, computers, and other equipment in fourteen sites spanning one hundred square miles surrounding the launch site in order to measure the sounds coming from the rocket. This was an amazing opportunity, and the students would only have one chance to collect this groundbreaking data. After all, you can't undo a rocket launch.

Because of the high importance and security of this launch, the students had to set up all their equipment twenty-four hours before liftoff. However, the instruments' batteries only lasted twelve hours, meaning the students needed a different way to power their equipment. They felt confident because they had added solar panels to the setup for previous experiments, and everything seemed to work great. This solution was considered the ideal choice for Florida, "the sunshine state." As the team prepared for the big launch, they decided to test the full setup one more time here on campus.

They set up all the equipment on the Eyring Science Center roof and left it to collect data, fully expecting everything to work. The way the solar panels were engineered, they were powerful enough that they should have easily

kept the batteries fully charged. Instead, the students returned the next day and found that the machines were completely dead. Something was seriously wrong. After some frantic troubleshooting over the next couple of days, the team discovered the system would break down and the components would stop working together if clouds covered the sun, even for a moment.

With limited funding and only four weeks until the launch, they had to quickly find a solution. The team of faculty and students immediately got to work. They tried everything, but where a miracle was needed, all they seemed to find were more unanswered questions.

It was an unusually overcast July for Provo, Utah, and all along the team wondered if the small glitch really mattered. After all, Florida's weather was typically sunny and bright. But as they tested options, they began to gain key insights about what would be needed in the final solution. While each failure was disappointing, little nuggets of truth came along the way. In the students' struggles there came growth, learning, and insight.

After weeks of testing everything they could, the team finally found the miracle they had been looking for, but it would require an immense amount of work. They would have to rebuild the equipment's power systems from the ground up. Working through the night, the students finished the alterations just hours before the instruments had to be sent to the launch site.

On the day of the launch, the team set up their equipment and hoped that all their hard work would pay off. As NASA began final preparations to send the rocket to space, clouds blanketed the sky, only occasionally letting the sun's rays through. If the students had not put in the work, none of their equipment would have functioned. The unusual string of cloudy days and weeks in Provo had, in fact, been a miracle, alerting the team to the hidden weakness. As Professor Kent L. Gee later remarked about the experience:

*The Lord didn't make it easy, but He certainly made it possible. I don't know that the Lord cares about rockets, but He cares about the BYU students and who they are becoming. This experience convinced me of that.*³

When the students were able to pick up their equipment after the launch, they discovered that they had 100 percent perfect data collection at all fourteen sites. Because of the solution they had built, the team secured the most important acoustical data ever collected from a rocket. This has created many additional collaboration opportunities for current and future BYU students across the university.

Similarly, it is not always an instantaneous process to let light into our lives. It is more of a process requiring effort and action. It takes trying and then trying again. And it is going to work a little differently for each of us.

When it comes to the metaphorical solar panels of our lives, the scriptures teach that Jesus Christ “is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened.”⁴

It can seem too simplistic for me to say, “Let that light shine upon you.” I get it—there are moments when we all feel as if we are standing there, our arms outstretched, thinking, “I have my SPF 100 on; I’m ready for the light. Where is it?”

Just like the brother of Jared, though, sometimes the way we let light shine in our lives isn’t the way we might have originally planned. Often the Lord requires us to take action. He asks that we walk the beach, come up with ideas, collect rocks, and then come to Him in humility, asking for help.⁵

I promise every single one of you, no matter your situation, that the Lord can provide a way for His light to fill your life. You are enough, and He will help you.

Recognizing Miracles

The second principle is that sometimes miracles are subtle, and we might miss them if we aren’t looking. When we think of miracles, it is easy to think of the big stories, such as those we see in the New Testament: the feeding of the five thousand,⁶ the blind men who received their sight,⁷ and the young woman who was brought back to life.⁸ It can be easy to miss the more subtle miracles.

As part of my job here at BYU, I introduce many important people to BYU’s College of Computational, Mathematical, and Physical Sciences. One of my favorite facilities to show

them is the BYU anechoic chamber. This research space has special foam pyramids on the walls, ceiling, and floor. All this padding blocks most of the echoes and sound reverberation in the room.

When you walk in, the background noise of everyday life is cut out. You don’t hear cars driving on the street, air flowing through vents, or even the faint hum of the building’s electricity. It is a new level of silence that most people have never experienced. As you stand in the room, you start to notice noises that used to be imperceptible. You might notice your breathing, your stomach gurgling, or even the sound of your heartbeat in your ears. Those noises were always there, but without the distractions of everyday sounds, they are now perceptible. By removing all the ambient noise, the anechoic chamber allows researchers to better measure and understand the sound of whatever they are studying.

Similarly, you and I are surrounded by miracles, but we might not always see them because we are distracted by all the other things going on in our lives. You will notice in the New Testament stories that when Jesus Christ performed a miracle, He often told the recipient that they had been forgiven of their sins.⁹ Perhaps He did this because He doesn’t want us to forget the very miraculous nature of the gifts you and I are blessed with every day.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ means that we all can be forgiven of our sins. As a very imperfect person who frequently makes mistakes, I can attest to what a miracle that is. The Atonement of Jesus Christ also gives us strength. As Elder David A. Bednar said, “The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own.”¹⁰

Pay attention to the miracles in your life. While we are all here having a very human experience full of trials, disappointments, grief, fear, and pain, we can also feel joy and peace in those moments. We are all blessed with miracles. God is constantly telling us that we can do this, but it sometimes takes a spiritual anechoic chamber for us to hear Him.

Finding Ourselves Through Service

The next principle is that we often find ourselves by helping others.

There is an interesting phrase in the Book of Mormon. It is “poison by degrees,”¹¹ and it is found in Alma 47, in the middle of the war chapters. Amalickiah, the bad guy of our story, was seeking power by any means necessary. He was a leader in the Lamanite army, but he was not happy with his position. He first tricked Lehonti, our good guy, into making him second in command of the army. Then Amalickiah had someone slowly administer “poison by degrees” to Lehonti until Lehonti died.¹²

Now, hopefully, most of us don’t have someone who is literally trying to kill us. It may feel like your organic chemistry finals are trying to kill you, but it is not quite the same thing. I think there is an interesting metaphor here though. Sometimes we can focus so much on our fears or mistakes that we begin to feel more and more inadequate. Sometimes we have challenges or difficulties build up in our lives, and it can almost feel as if we are being poisoned by degrees.

As I have prepared for this talk today, I have felt directed to share a personal experience. Most of my colleagues and students don’t know this story because I tend to be a private person. But this experience was one in which I felt that I was poisoned by degrees, and I want to share how I found hope and purpose again.

My husband, Curtis, and I have wanted to be parents for a while, but it hadn’t worked out for us. Infertility has been a long and difficult challenge. We have an incredible life with a good marriage, awesome family, fulfilling careers, and the world’s best dog. However, we still want to be parents. After having been married for almost a decade, it was starting to seem as if it might never happen.

Then I got pregnant. It felt like such a miracle. We were so excited and so scared, but my first doctor’s appointment went well. Then at twelve weeks I had my first ultrasound because of some worrying symptoms. The tech was silent as she did the scans. I knew something was very wrong. I was whisked away into another room where the medical team explained that, in addition to a miscarriage, I had a rare complication that causes tumors to grow. I needed surgery right away to remove the tumors because I was at high risk of hemorrhaging.

I hardly slept that night. I stayed up all night reading about my diagnosis and wondering why this had to happen. Why did we have those months when we thought we were getting our miracle only to end up in a much worse circumstance? I had never heard of this condition and didn’t know anyone who had been through it. I felt so alone.

The surgery went well, but the doctor told me that my situation was still serious. As the weeks went on, tiny traces of the tumors could still be detected. The only solution was chemotherapy—literally poisoning my body by degrees in hopes of completely eradicating the tumors. So I would start my morning by checking into the hospital, getting an IV, and then receiving my toxic medication. Then I would come to work here at BYU. Every day I would get a little weaker and the side effects would get stronger.

But the worst part was that I started to get really discouraged. This was the real poison in my life. I was dealing with grief. I had opened space in my heart and life for a child, and I deeply felt that loss. I was looking for purpose in my life. I was overwhelmed and discouraged. I was praying, but I still felt lost.

Interestingly, before all this began, I was scheduled to go on a work trip to American Samoa with a BYU study abroad program called Rheumatic Relief, which provides health clinics for children in areas where there is a high risk for rheumatic heart disease. This program had been part of BYU for many years, and we were relaunching it after the pandemic had passed. As a communicator, my job was to capture the story of the trip by conducting interviews and taking photos and videos. I would also provide administrative support.

The problem was that the trip was scheduled to start right after what would now be my tenth chemo infusion. My oncologist told me I should cancel the trip. I, being the easygoing patient that I am, told him I thought he was wrong. I asked him to reconsider because I was really struggling with everything and I wanted and needed to do some good in the world. I needed to balance out the darkness by bringing light into my life. My oncologist said he would consult with his colleagues, and a few days later he gave permission.

By the time the trip came around, I was quite sick from the chemo. I didn't have much energy as I began packing. My husband and dog did everything they could to help me, which is why none of my clothes matched during the trip and everything had a little bit of fur on it.

I got on the plane, and I prayed that I could be of some use. I prayed for hope and purpose. I tried to trust that this was where God wanted me, and I threw myself into the work.

Healing Light

I spent my days in American Samoa interacting with hundreds of children. I helped them through the clinic, asked them questions, and took their pictures and videos. I learned the stories of the BYU students, and I helped the medical team in whatever way I could. I worked as hard as I could, and then I crashed in my hotel room as soon as we were done with the clinic every day. And as I served during those long, hot, sweaty days, I felt something begin to change. Though the chemo still filled my veins, my heart started to heal.

Very quickly we started to find cases of rheumatic heart disease among the children we were testing. I knew this would happen—that is why we were there, after all—but it was so humbling to look into the faces of these children and realize that they had a serious hidden medical condition. Every diagnosis brought a moment of hope too. This meant that the incredible American Samoa health department could start treating the child and stop the heart disease from progressing. The children would need treatment for years or decades, but they would live long, healthy lives because they had this diagnosis and could receive expert care from their local medical team in the coming years.

Then we found a nine-year-old boy with an advanced case—his heart was already so damaged from the disease that he needed open heart surgery to repair two heart valves. I noticed Dr. David Cragun, a cardiologist and BYU alumnus, sitting with the boy long after the scan and answering all his questions. I later found out that the boy had asked questions about his diagnosis, surgery, and other items relevant to his situation.

One question the little boy asked stood out to me. After hearing about the long challenge ahead of him, he looked up at Dr. Cragun and asked if he could at least still go to football practice after school that day. He was just a kid!

I felt God's love for the people in American Samoa. I could feel how important it was that we were there sharing our time, talents, and resources. God needed us to help bless some of His children. As I felt that love, I started to also feel glimpses of God's love for me.

I realized that even though it might have been the hardest week of my life physically, it had changed everything spiritually and mentally. I was no longer overwhelmed by frustrations and the fear of not feeling that I was enough.

Through serving, I finally received the perspective that I needed to begin healing and to stop feeling so lost. It was a real testament to the Savior's promise in Matthew 16:25: "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Now I don't want to act like everything suddenly became easy. It didn't. I still had weeks of chemo waiting for me when I returned home. I still had a lot to face and to overcome. But as I stand here almost exactly one year after finishing chemo, I want to bear testimony that the Lord was there for me, strengthening me and helping me find the answers I needed.

As I did everything that I could to bring light into my life, the Savior multiplied that light.

The World Needs You

At BYU and in the Church, service is an integral part of who we are and what we do. You have all seen the signs on campus that read "Enter to learn; go forth to serve." We often talk about this at graduation, and that is certainly a fitting time. However, I hope this phrase is also ingrained in your everyday life.

"Go forth to serve" is certainly a call to action. It is also a gift. When we serve, we receive hope, peace, gratitude, and purpose for our lives.

You are surrounded by people who need *you*. They need your unique talents and abilities. They need the hope only you can give.

Looking back, many of the greatest experiences in my life have been those in which I was the

answer to someone else’s prayers. When you feel overwhelmed while looking at the challenges in our world, look to God and to those around you who might need your help. God will help you find ways in which you can contribute and do good. He will help you see the people who need your help the most.

So let’s bring this back to Amalickiah. Throughout our lives we all have different Amalickiahs that we have to deal with. In some cases it is six midterms in one week. At other times it may be feelings of inadequacy, temptation, a series of difficult trials, questions of faith, discouragement, or even loneliness.

In all those cases, the best thing we can do is to bring Light into our lives: *Light* with a capital *L*. John 8:12 reads: “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

We need that Light always, but especially when we face the challenges of our lives. The promised blessings we will receive are powerful. President Russell M. Nelson said:

*When sore trials come upon us, it’s time to deepen our faith in God, to work hard, and to serve others. Then He will heal our broken hearts. He will bestow upon us personal peace and comfort.*¹³

The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes it possible for Him to help us with whatever our challenges may be. While it is disconcerting to not always see the path forward, we can have peace knowing that the Savior is our guide and our strength. As the Lord told Nephi:

*I will also be your light in the wilderness; and I will prepare the way before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments; wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led.*¹⁴

I want to bear my testimony that Jesus is the Christ. There is peace in following Him, especially during turbulent times. I want to bear testimony that whatever you are facing, He knows how to help, bless, and strengthen you. I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. C. Shane Reese, “Becoming the Sine Qua Non,” BYU commencement address, 25 April 2024; quoting Clark G. Gilbert, “Dare to Be Different,” *Deseret News*, 14 September 2022; also quoting Reese, “Becoming BYU: An Inaugural Response,” address delivered at his inauguration as BYU president, 19 September 2023. See also Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” BYU devotional address, 10 October 1975.

2. M. Russell Ballard, “Watch Ye Therefore, and Pray Always,” *Ensign*, November 2020; emphasis in original; see Alma 34:27–29.

3. Kimberly O. Jenkins interview with Kent L. Gee, 17 June 2024.

4. Mosiah 16:9.

5. See Ether 2:16–25; 3:1–6.

6. See Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:31–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–13.

7. See Matthew 9:27–31; Matthew 20:30–34; John 9:1–7.

8. See Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56.

9. See, for example, Matthew 9:2–8.

10. David A. Bednar, “‘In the Strength of the Lord’ (Words of Mormon 1:14; Mosiah 9:17; Mosiah 10:10; Alma 20:4),” BYU devotional address, 23 October 2001.

11. Alma 47:18.

12. See Alma 47:1–19.

13. Russell M. Nelson, “Jesus Christ—the Master Healer,” *Ensign*, November 2005; see “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, 2002, no. 140, verse 3; John 14:27; Isaiah 40:1 and John 14:16–17.

14. 1 Nephi 17:13.