

# *Rely upon the Lord*

CINZIA DONATELLI NOBLE

**I**t is a pleasure for me to be here today and share a few of my thoughts with you. It is also overwhelming, and frightening, to be in front of such an audience—in front of you who already know so much about the gospel, you who have had many great and inspiring experiences of your own in your lives. Today I am going to talk about something in which I have a strong testimony. I firmly believe, without a doubt, that my whole life has been a miracle. I don't know why, to tell you the truth, but the Lord has been good to me. He has preserved me and guided me. I am thankful for this, and I want to communicate to you that I know for a fact that if we trust and rely upon the Lord, we will be blessed and guided toward that which is good for us and for all those with whom we come in contact.

In 1 Nephi 10:6 we read: "Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer." Also, in 2 Nephi 22:2, we read: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation." I am very happy to have the Lord on my side. He is such an ally who loves me and cares for me. Had it not been for the Lord, I would not be here today.

The very day I was born some medical complications arose, and the doctors did not have any hope for my survival. Almost all of the other infants in similar situations had died a few days after birth, but I was a tiny little fighter and the Lord preserved me. My life began with a miracle, and a miracle it has been indeed ever since. I am sure that, if each one of you now pauses and thinks about your own life circumstances, all of you can think of many instances when you have been helped, preserved, guided, healed, or when you witnessed a miracle. We are all entitled to such blessings, and we receive them daily because we are children of a Heavenly Father who loves us and takes care of us. However, often we forget where these blessings come from, and we tend to believe that we succeed because we are strong, intelligent, or even handsome. We need to recognize more the Lord's hand in our life, to be worthy of His blessings, and to be humble in receiving them.

Often when I witness a miracle I don't immediately recognize it as such, and I think that it was a circumstance or my own ability in

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accomplishing a certain task. I am glad that the Lord humbles me and that He soon reminds me that it wasn't I who accomplished it, but that it was His own hand involved. When I think of this, I can't help but remember an experience, a frightening one, from many years ago. I had a two-year-old boy. That boy is now sitting with his sister in this audience today and has become a handsome young man. (At least *I* think he is handsome, but I am his proud mother!) That day, 12 years ago and early in the morning, I was busy getting ready to come to school and briefly stepped out of the room where we were. I left the room for just a couple of minutes. I was sure that Alessandro was safe; he was just playing with his toys.

I didn't know that he had gotten hold of a little candy container with a small plastic cap on it. As he put the container in his mouth, as toddlers do, the plastic cap came loose and lodged in his throat. He coughed a couple of times, then the cap went in deeper in his throat and clogged it completely. In the other room I was almost done doing whatever I was doing, and I heard him cough. I thought, "I'll give Sandro some cough medicine in a moment, as soon as I am done here," and I continued with my business.

Then I don't know what happened. Something, someone took me from the room I was in, and I found myself by my son's side. Up to this day I do not remember consciously deciding to go to him, going through the hallway, and approaching him. I simply found myself at his side. I saw that his lips had turned blue and that he was not breathing. I cannot forget the fearful look in his eyes, pleading for me to help him. I took him and gave him the Heimlich maneuver once, then twice. Nothing happened. I was shaking hard with apprehension. Sandro was becoming limp. I cried to the Lord: "Help me, Lord! Help me save my child!" I tried the maneuver a third time, with a strength that I did not have

but the strength that the Lord gave me, and I pushed hard at the bottom of his sternum. The plastic cap came out with the speed of a bullet and dented the kitchen wall. I started crying, and Sandro started crying. He coughed again, spitting some blood. I thought that I had broken something inside his chest, for I had pushed so hard. I then attempted to call Dr. Willis, a dear friend of ours and our family physician. I took the phone receiver in my hand and tried to dial up the number. I could not do it. My hands were shaking so hard that I couldn't direct them on the right numbers. Finally I managed to call, and the doctor told me not to worry, that probably the cap had scratched the boy's throat and that the bleeding would cease. In fact, my son did stop bleeding. I sat down on the couch with Alessandro in my arms, crying and thanking the Lord for His help. For the following three days I had absolutely no strength in my whole body. I know that whatever was necessary to save my son never came from me. The Lord loved us so much and came to our rescue when we needed Him the most. I pray that I never, never forget the source of the strength that I needed that day and that I can always remember to be thankful for it.

We can trust the Lord. He never forgets any of us or any of our needs. Sometimes we do not get what we ask for. Then we must stop and think for a minute: maybe we are not supposed to get what we think we need. Even if our desires are just, maybe it's not the right time in our life or maybe it's never going to be the right time in this mortal life. We need to totally trust in the Lord, put ourselves in His hands, and accept our lot in life. This is not easy, but, if we are close to the Spirit, it will be easier for us to accept what comes to us. When my father was deathly ill with cancer, I earnestly prayed that he would be healed, that his life would be spared. He was such a good man; he did not deserve to suffer so. Then, as the illness progressed, the Lord touched my heart and

my prayers changed. I asked that my mother and I would receive strength, patience, and an accepting attitude for whatever we were going to face. The Lord blessed us, and we were able to accept the passing of my dad. Even if the loss was great and the loneliness in our hearts deep, we felt peace in our souls.

Several years ago I had a dear friend, an older friend, who had many health problems. As she grew older, several physical ailments plagued her, and she often complained about her situation and became depressed. I tried to help her, but for some reason I couldn't really reach out and felt frustrated myself. I sought advice from my dear mother-in-law and expressed to her my inadequacy in helping my friend. Sister Noble was herself an older lady with several physical limitations. She listened to me, thought a little, and then said a few but very wise words: "Your friend should have more faith and trust in the Lord." It is true. If we give of ourselves freely to the Lord, our burdens will be lifted and our hearts will be consoled.

Several examples of hope and trust in the Lord have come to me from you, the young, beautiful, faithful students of this university. More than 10 years ago I had an excellent student in my Italian classes. Let's call her Debbie. If she is listening, she will recognize her story. Debbie was always punctual to class and in her assignments. She had always been an A student in the several classes she had taken from me. That semester she was again enrolled in another one of my courses.

One day she had not arrived by 10:00 a.m., when the class began. It was the first time that she had been absent. I thought that she was probably ill. At 10 minutes after 10:00 a.m., she walked into the class and quietly sat down at one of the desks. I noted in my mind that that was strange and then went on with my lesson. At the end of the class she waited for everyone to leave and then approached me. She said, "Sister Noble, I am sorry I was late for class

today, but last night I had my third miscarriage in a row." Her eyes were glossy with tears for the sorrow of having lost a much-desired baby, and she was shaking a little. My dedicated, sweet, dear Debbie! I told her to go home immediately and to rest, and that we would worry about the assignments later. She was discouraged by the recurring problems in her desire to become a mother, but serene in her countenance and faithful in her attitude. She trusted in the Lord and knew that everything would be fine, that if she and her husband were faithful and strong the Lord would bless them—with or without children in this mortal life. I will never forget that day with Debbie. I admired her strength and faith and hoped that I could have a fraction of it myself. I told her "tongue in cheek" that I would fail her if I found out that she didn't take the day off and get some rest.

A few years later I received a phone call from Debbie. She told me that she had two children and that she and her husband were very happy. Debbie, wherever you are, I will never forget you and your example.

Our human knowledge is so very limited. I often wonder how we can ever trust it. As I teach Italian 20th-century literature, we read from many wonderful authors—men and women who have witnessed the horrors of two world wars, of Fascism and of Nazism. At the beginning of that century, Italy and Europe were going through a time of decadence when people didn't know the purpose of life. In Italy this sentiment was even more acute since the new country, united in 1861 after centuries of foreign servitude and the sacrifice of many patriots, had looked to the future with hopes of political renovation and technological enhancements. People soon found out how feeble the foundations of human strength were and began asking themselves the same eternal questions: "Who am I? Where do I come from? What am I doing here? Where am I going?"  
Luigi Pirandello and Eugenio Montale,

recipients of the Nobel Prize for literature, asked themselves these same existential questions. Cesare Pavese searched for his roots, for his identity, for his purpose in life. Without the comfort of religion, this sensitive, gentle man felt alone and hopeless. These people wrote of their quest for a purpose and of their failure to find it. How much desperation we see in those who do not have faith, and how much hope there is in those who, even in the most dire circumstances, let the Lord comfort them.

In 2 Nephi 4:34 we read: “O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh.” One of the Lord’s most chosen servants, our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith, tried for a long time to find the true church by himself. He inquired of many learned people and preachers but never got the right answer. He received perfect knowledge only when he gave himself to the Lord in the Sacred Grove. After that first vision his life was difficult for him; he was persecuted and finally murdered. Nonetheless, he was a forbearing and contented man, a man blessed in many ways even in adversity. He had faith and trust in the Lord, no matter what happened to him. His perspective was eternal. Let’s all remember our eternal potential, and let’s not be limited by our human dimension. We can do it, if we are in tune with the Spirit of the Lord and if we accept the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

President Spencer W. Kimball has said:

*The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit and comes into our lives to lead us in the paths of righteousness. Each person on whom authoritative hands have been placed will receive the Holy Ghost. He will lead us unto all truth. And so we are a blessed people with all these special blessings. If one does not receive the great gift of the Holy Ghost, then it is his fault, that he hasn’t been spiritual enough or close enough to Heavenly Father. [TSWK, 22–23]*

And for those who are not yet baptized and confirmed, our prophets have told us that we all have a sort of a compass to guide us and to tell us what is right and what is wrong in an unmistakably clear way: it is the divine gift of our conscience (see TSWK, 113). For us, in this estate, there is only one sure way, and I quote again from President Kimball: “Follow the Holy Spirit within you and follow the prophets, dead and living” (TSWK, 114).

Another perfect example of complete trust in the Lord comes from the Old Testament. Who does not remember the faith of Abraham when he obeyed the Lord, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice his own son? I don’t know if I would ever be able to go that far, and I am overwhelmed by the greatness of Abraham’s faith. I don’t believe that the Lord will ask me and you to go that far, but I know that we are all going to be tested in one way or another. We are here for this very reason, to be tested and to prove our faith.

This reminds me of another incident that happened in the life of my husband’s mother. Just a couple of years before her passing, she was a worker in the Provo Temple. She loved attending the temple and working there. She had the early morning shift, and she usually left her home around five in the morning and, at age 80, drove to Provo from her Orem home.

One January morning her car would not start. It was snowing and very cold. She tried a few times to get the engine going, but to no avail. She was determined to fulfill her calling and to not disturb anyone at that early hour. After a short prayer to the Lord, she didn’t lose courage and started walking, at age 80, at five in the morning, in January, while it was snowing hard. I assure you, I am not making this up; it is true in every detail.

This modern pioneer woman walked half a block, and a car stopped next to her. An older gentleman was driving and asked her if he could be of assistance. Sister Noble did not want to bother him too much and asked him

where he was going, to see if their two destinations were nearby. Well, he was also going to the temple and offered her a ride.

When that afternoon she called us to take her back home and told us this story, we gently scolded her for not calling us that morning and urged her to promise us not to do it again.

Then, with her usual sweetness and calm, she answered back and said: "Okay, I'll call you next time, and I won't do it again. But you kids, you don't have enough faith. I knew that I would be all right." She said this simply, almost unbelieving of our concern. She was on the Lord's business, and He was going to help her. What were we worried about?

In today's world we are faced, every day, by many challenges and trials. Our modern, technologically advanced world will not be able to furnish all answers, all advice, all support. In an old little book I found the following words, which I believe are still true:

*Astronomy has mapped the heavens and attempted to number the stars, but on its sky chart we find no star of Bethlehem, and in its sky no Sun of righteousness.*

*Geology has combed the stratified layers of earth's foundations, but it has found no Rock of Ages.*

*Physics, with its electric light, has illuminated cities until the night is banished, but it knows not the Light of the world.*

*Mineralogy has sifted the stones of the earth, and sounded the depths of the seas, but it has found no pearls of great price.*

*Oh, the unwisdom of this age of the wise! Men, now as never before, by wisdom know not God.*  
[Albert L. Zobell, comp., *Story Sermons* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 52–53]

It is up to us to know the Lord and to be in tune with His Spirit so that when we are faced with life's challenges we will be ready to ask for help and, more important, ready to listen and be open to the Lord's comfort. Laman and

Lemuel witnessed many miracles and prodigies, yet they were blind to the Spirit and did not recognize the miracles poured upon them. I pray that we can all be ready to always accept the Lord in our lives and that when in five, 10, or even 40 years, when we are so discouraged that we want to say, "I give up, I can't go on like this anymore," we can be alert and responsive to the whisperings of the Spirit. Our whole life is a mission for the building of the kingdom, and we all need to feed our spiritual bodies as well as our physical bodies and our minds. We have to do this daily, because spiritual starvation is a constant danger today.

Many of you have gone on full-time missions, and many of you are preparing to go out soon. Relying on the Spirit is the best preparation for missionary work. In 1974 two missionaries who were in Italy came and knocked at my door. My mother was alone at home that day and, before letting them in, she looked through the peep hole of our door on the seventh floor of the apartment building in which we lived. You see, the week before one of her friends had been attacked in her home while she was alone. Two young men had introduced themselves as employees of a utilities company, and the woman allowed them in the home to check the gas lines. They seized her, hit her in the forehead with a gun, fired a shot in the air to scare her, and robbed her of all her jewelry. My mother had gone to visit that friend in the hospital just a couple of days earlier. Now, she was not going to let those two young men with a foreign accent into the house, especially when no one else was there. She told them that she was the maid and that she was not allowed to let anyone in.

The two missionaries left, marked my address with a check, and went on to the next home. A few days later they happened in my neighborhood again, and the same scenario followed. My mother was home alone, and the missionaries were not permitted to enter. All you returned missionaries can relate to this

experience, and I am sure that you remember how disappointed you were in similar situations. Well, as you know, after two or three unsuccessful tries, missionaries usually don't go back to the same place. They look for friendlier people! Those two missionaries were later assigned to a different neighborhood and for awhile worked in another area of the town.

Some time went by, and one day my mother saw a missionary street board in the main square of our town. Her interest was immediately drawn by the pictures and the writings on the board, and she began talking to the missionaries. Suddenly it started to rain, one of those thick and abrupt rainstorms of central Italy that keep the country beautifully green but that also catch you by surprise. My mother ran away to take cover. She still had many questions in her mind but didn't have the time to give her name or address to the missionaries.

The next day or so, the same first two missionaries happened—and I emphasize “happened”—into my neighborhood. They were still working in another part of town, but that day they decided to take a different way home. As they were walking down my street, one of the missionaries asked the other one if they should try that building on 71 Carducci Street again—on the seventh floor. His companion told him that it would be a waste of time; they had already tried three times! The first missionary then replied, “I don't know why, but I know that we have to go back to that residence. I have no explanation, no reason—I just feel that we have to try again.”

So they went up the stairs, rang the doorbell, and waited outside for a little while. My mother was alone again, but that day, that time, she did open the door, and she let them in. That missionary is the reason why I am here today, why I began attending this church, why I was baptized, and why now I have been married in the temple for time and all eternity, with a beautiful family and eternal blessings await-

ing me. That missionary listened to the Spirit, and he could hear the Spirit because he was ready to listen. My life is a miracle, a miracle made possible by the faith of another, and by the love of the Lord for me.

The Lord is ready to pour blessings on us if we just let Him do it. He loves us; we are His children; He listens to our prayers. Jonathan Golden Kimball was born in Salt Lake City in 1853. He, with his father, Heber C. Kimball, and with President Brigham Young, visited the settlements of the early Saints. He served as a missionary in the southern United States and later was called as president of the Southern States Mission at Chattanooga, Tennessee. Recounting one of his life experiences, he recalled the words that President Wilford Woodruff spoke to him one day: “Now, Brother Kimball, I have had visions, I have had revelations, I have seen angels, but the greatest of all is that still small voice” (J. Golden Kimball, *CR*, April 1924, 70).

That is, indeed, the greatest gift of all: that still small voice to which we are all entitled if we search for it. Pray, stay close to the Lord, read the scriptures, attend Church, obey the commandments, and have hope and faith in the Lord. We have been taught to pray continually that we may receive the Spirit and that we will not be tempted beyond our strength. We must counsel with the Lord in all our doings, and we must not perform any action without praying to the Father in the name of Christ. (See Marion D. Hanks, *The Gift of Self* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974], 173.)

We will have trials, but let's accept them as part of this earthly experience. Let's recognize that our lives are a miracle, a miracle of love and of innumerable blessings. The Lord loves us and will comfort and help us always. I know this for a fact, a fact as sure and real as I am standing here in front of you today. I echo the words of Elder John A. Widtsoe:

*By this faith, which teaches me that I am eternal, with an existence before this life, and an ever active life hereafter, I am given full courage to battle against evil, whether in myself or in others. . . .*

*By this faith my joy in life is abundant, my sorrows are tempered, my trust in the ultimate triumph of good over evil is unshakable. [In Testimonies of the Divinity of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Its Leaders (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1930), 193]*

I know who I am: I am a daughter of a Heavenly Father who loves me. Because of this knowledge, I know where I came from, what I am doing here, and where I am going. I am thankful to my parents, who have taught me good principles and have fed both my body and my spirit, unknowingly preparing me to receive the gospel when the right time came. As I mentioned before, I was not born in the Church, but the Lord prepared me to be a member when he saved me from death at my birth, when I was still a little girl, and when He instilled in my mind the right questions and, especially, the right spirit. I longed for a prophet, I prayed using my own words, and I needed more knowl-

edge. It wasn't I who was looking for these things; it was the Spirit of the Lord who touched my soul. President Brigham Young said:

*When true doctrines are advanced, though they may be new to the hearers, yet the principles contained in them are perfectly natural and easy to be understood, so much so that the hearers often imagine that they had always known them. This arises from the influence of the Spirit of Truth upon the spirit of intelligence that is within each person. [JD 9:254]*

Dear brothers and sisters, I know that the Church is true, that President Hinckley is a prophet of God here on earth to guide and to direct us. I know that we are the children of a loving Heavenly Father. I know that if I am faithful and worthy, I will always receive the blessings of which I am in need. Finally, as I have read in one of those e-mails that bounce from computer to computer, originating from you don't know where: "May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human, enough hope to bring you joy."

I say this in the name of our Savior, our older brother Jesus Christ, amen.