

Lessons from Roses: Trust Yourself and Trust God

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Years ago, when we were landscaping the yard of our new home, my father, who owned a hardware store, asked me if I would like some rose bushes that he had for sale at a very discounted price. It was an offer I couldn't refuse. I thought that roses would look very nice next to the white rail fence that bordered our front yard. I bought more than twenty rose bushes.

We live close to the base of Rock Canyon, which means that there is very little soil and a lot of rocks. Kevin took on the arduous task of digging the holes for the roses. Due to the difficulty of digging, we decided to dig the holes just big enough to pour in enough soil to surround the roots of the roses—not really the ideal amount of soil, but, given the situation, we hoped it would be adequate. As it turns out, it was.

Our roses thrived. We really didn't do too much to them. They were watered whenever the lawn was watered, they received plenty of sunshine, and, happily, they did well in our yard, rocks and all.

Normally I would prune the roses as soon as it looked like they needed it. One year, however, I waited longer than usual to prune them—about a month longer. The roses already had quite a bit

of new growth on them, but I decided to prune them anyway. When I was finished, there wasn't much left. I had cut them back drastically—much more than I usually did. But I was pleased with the results.

Who knew that pruning roses a month later than usual—and drastically at that—would have unexpected consequences? Immediately after I had pruned the roses, I had several people tell me that it was too late in the season for cutting roses and that I had cut them back too much. Initially it didn't bother me, but pretty soon I began to believe them. I started to feel like I had done something I shouldn't have. I started to doubt my decision. I was sorry I had cut my roses.

I remember one man asking me incredulously, "What have you done? Do you realize that you won't have roses this year?"

And a woman in our neighborhood who had a lovely garden quipped, "You shouldn't have cut them so late and so much!" And then she added, "Oh well, we live and we learn."

Peggy S. Worthen, wife of BYU president Kevin J Worthen, delivered this devotional address on January 9, 2018.

I felt terrible. I believed I had ruined my roses! At that point I did the only thing I could think of doing. I called my mother! I knew she would help me feel better. She was a gardener. She had roses.

I told her about the terrible thing I had done. And, to my pleasant surprise, she assured me that I hadn't done anything wrong. She advised me to go to a nursery and buy a book on roses. I would find that I hadn't ruined them.

I did as she suggested. I bought a book on roses and was relieved to find out that I hadn't ruined them. In fact, I read that when pruning roses, you should cut them back "severely." I definitely had cut my roses back severely. The book was very helpful. It taught me that the only way I could ruin the roses was to pull them out of the ground, stop watering them, or prevent them from getting sunlight.

Now I had two sources of assurance: my mother and my rose book. Even though I had some reassurances that my rose bushes would be fine, I was still a little sensitive and skeptical. I really hoped the roses would grow back, but there remained some doubt in my mind—doubt that was reinforced by continued negative assessments from my neighbors.

I anxiously checked on my roses every day, looking for any kind of growth. Finally I saw growth and was thrilled that I hadn't ruined my roses after all. I don't know why I worried so much. I hadn't pulled them out by the roots, I hadn't stopped watering them, and they were receiving plenty of sunshine. Eventually there were fully bloomed roses in my yard again—a month later than normal, but there were roses!

Do Not Doubt What You Know to Be True

Although the experience with the roses was not critical to my salvation, I did learn two important lessons. The first lesson was to not doubt what you know to be true. Sometimes we allow ourselves to listen and believe things that we know are contrary to what we know to be true. When others question our beliefs, we may start to panic and begin to doubt. For several years I had pruned

my roses, and they had grown each time without fail. And then the year I did it a little differently, people who were well intended essentially told me that what I believed to be right was actually wrong. I began to believe them.

An episode of *Studio C* demonstrates this. Matt is a contestant on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and has made it to the final question. If Matt answers correctly, he will win one million dollars.

The host asks Matt's wife what they will do with the money if Matt wins, and she responds that it will go toward helping orphans in third-world countries. With that, the final question is given. The question is "Who was the twenty-sixth president of the United States?" Among the four choices are Theodore Roosevelt and George Washington. Matt is certain that it is not George Washington. Matt knows that George Washington was the first president of the United States. Matt thinks the answer is Theodore Roosevelt, but, to be certain, he polls the audience.

One hundred percent of the audience—which includes Matt's wife—chooses George Washington. Matt apologizes to the audience and to his wife and tells them that he really doesn't think it was George Washington.

Matt then is able to phone his sister for help. She just happens to be a professor of history. Matt is confident that she will know. But immediately his sister answers that it was George Washington.

Frustrated, Matt tells them that they are all wrong, that this is basic history—everyone knows that George Washington was the first president. Throughout the entire segment the host continually asks Matt, "Are you sure?" whenever Matt says that he is certain about his decision.

There is a lot at stake, and Matt is starting to succumb to the pressure and is waning in his confidence. He finally gives in, saying the twenty-sixth president must be George Washington, which is incorrect, and Matt loses the million dollars. (See "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire Fail," *Studio C*, season 2, episode 18, [youtube.com/watch?v=eTezdMLJoyE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTezdMLJoyE).)

While Matt's plight may be unbelievable, it illustrates why President Dieter F. Uchtdorf once implored, "My dear brothers and sisters . . . , please, first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith" ("Come, Join with Us," *Ensign*, November 2013). That is invaluable advice for growing roses and even more so for growing our testimonies of the gospel.

The Simple Things Are Often the Most Important Things

The second lesson was that the simple things are often the most important things. It didn't take long for me to realize that it wasn't important how or when I cut my roses. All they needed to thrive and bloom were a few simple things, such as water, sunshine, and proper drainage for their roots. It didn't matter what advice I was given or followed on how to care for my roses as long as those simple needs were met.

In today's world we are bombarded with so much information about so many things that we may lose sight of what is most important and become overly concerned with things that don't ultimately matter. We may even begin to doubt revelations we have had. It is important at those times to remember the simple things that

helped us develop our testimonies and to trust that focusing on those things will ensure that we stay on the right path. If we seriously engage in daily scripture study and prayer and if we regularly attend our meetings and serve others, we can—and must—trust that God will let us know what we need to do at critical times in our lives.

Sometimes we make things more complicated than they need to be. We need to not worry too much about the details of our lives. As Elder David A. Bednar has observed, "No member of this church who is trying to be . . . good . . . will fail to be warned by the Holy Ghost if they are heading in a direction that is not right" ("Elder and Sister Bednar—Recognizing the Spirit," Face to Face event, 12 May 2015, LDS Media Library, 2:54–3:04, [lds.org/media-library/video/2015-05-2008-elder-and-sister-bednar-recognizing-the-spirit?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/2015-05-2008-elder-and-sister-bednar-recognizing-the-spirit?lang=eng)). As we focus on the basics—the water, sun, and drainage of spiritual things—the other things will work out.

As the new year begins, I hope you can trust yourself and trust God—that as you act on what you know to be true and focus on the basic things that enable your knowledge to grow, God will make your life more beautiful than any roses. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.