

Of All Our Needs, I Think the Greatest Is an Increase in Faith

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In the fall of 1960 an 18-year-old young man by the name of Roger from Idaho Falls, upon the persuasion of his parents, enrolled at Brigham Young University as a freshman. Once on campus he made new friends and a new commitment to Church and family. During this time he began to think about serving a mission. However, he was not sure if he should go as soon as he turned 19. That October his parents came to attend general conference, where Roger met them in Salt Lake City and went to conference with them.

At the end of the conference, as Roger and his mother were standing at the back of the Tabernacle waiting for his father, they were watching the General Authorities walk past as they exited the Tabernacle. It was especially thrilling to see the prophet, David O. McKay. As Roger stood there a thought came to his mind, if he could shake hands with the prophet it would be an acknowledgement that he should do all he can to serve a mission. President McKay was so loved that there was a very large crowd of Saints waiting to see him. Some of those in the front rows were able to shake his hand. Roger was standing a couple of rows back, but as President McKay was about to get into his waiting car, he turned around and reached his hand over the crowd and shook Roger's hand.

On December 13, 1960, Roger received his mission call to the Southern Far East Mission with headquarters in Hong Kong. Little did Roger know that his decision to serve a mission would have great impact on my life. In faraway China when I was about 8 years old my parents left in a hurry for Hong Kong to escape the communist invasion of our city. I was left behind with my aunt who was my mother's youngest sister.

A year later my parents met a woman who was taking her daughter back to China to live while she would return to Hong Kong to work. My parents asked the woman if she would bring me to Hong Kong using her daughter's passport, and the woman accepted the assignment and a sum of money for this favor.

I remember my aunt telling me about this woman. She helped me to memorize the name of the little girl and instructed me that I would be using that name when I crossed the border to Hong Kong with this woman to be reunited with my family. It was a joyous occasion when I finally arrived in Hong Kong to live with my family.

When I was 12, I met the missionaries through a classmate, Anna. I was then attending a Lutheran school in which my mother was a member of their congregation. I often attended church with my mother but I never felt I belonged. One day as Anna and I were walking home from school we saw two young American men walking toward us. Surprisingly, Anna greeted them. Being that I came from China, where I was taught that Americans were evil people, I stood aside and didn't want to have anything to do with these *Quai Lows*, or foreign devils. But Anna brought them to me and they shook my hand and spoke to me in Cantonese. They proceeded to tell me about a prophet named Joseph Smith. I had been taught that the Bible was the only scripture, and since the name Joseph Smith could not be found in the Bible I rejected their message and those of other missionaries as well.

One night two missionaries knocked on our door and asked for me. Surprisingly, my mother allowed them in. One of the elders told me that from the record he could see that I had gone through several sets of missionaries and he wanted to know what my problem was. I told him that I could not accept Joseph Smith as a prophet, and he asked if I had read the Book of Mormon and prayed about it. I said no, and he challenged me to do so in order for me to find out if it was true. I wanted to get rid of them and so I promised them that I would study and pray about it. That night as I got into bed to sleep I thought of my promise to them. I got up and started to read the Book of Mormon.

Afterwards, I knelt down to pray sincerely to the Lord asking if this was true. Nothing spectacular happened, but I did feel a sense of peace and serenity. As I continued to study and pray I became a very active nonmember of the branch. I was asked to help with the Primary every Saturday by rounding up the children and taking them on the bus to church to attend Primary. I would save my daily allowance from my breakfast and lunch so that I had money to help pay for the bus fares for some of them. The chapel soon became my second home.

After a while, my mother began to resent the Church for occupying so much of my time. Her ministers took advantage of her discontent to tell her falsehoods about Mormonism. This upset her even more, and she started to restrict my Church activities. In those days church was held in two sessions, Sunday School in the morning and sacrament meeting in the afternoon. I was only allowed to go to one but not both. It was very difficult for me as I was a translator in Sunday School class and then I was the chorister for sacrament meeting. I just had to go to both. From then on I had to be extra good around the house. On Sundays I would get up very early and do all the chores in order to put my mother in a position that she really could not refuse to let me go to church. After Sunday School I would just stay in the chapel and wait for sacrament meeting in the afternoon. I knew that if I went home my mother would not let me go out again. From that time on, whenever my mother was upset with me, I would find the door locked upon my return from church

and there would not be any dinner. My Church friends would buy me some bread to eat while I waited outside the door until my father let me in.

As I was going through this difficult time my desire to be baptized increased each day. After I listened to the eighteen discussions I knew I wanted to be a member of the true church. When the missionaries challenged me to be baptized I told them I had to wait because I knew my parents would not sign the permission form.

A short time later I overheard my parents making plans to go to Macau to visit an aging aunt. An idea came to mind and the next day I told the missionaries that I could be baptized on Saturday. The night before my baptism I packed my little wicker school basket with a towel and a change of clothes. Well, like many things in life this event did not work out as smoothly as planned. My parents surprised us and returned home a day earlier on Friday night. I was determined to go ahead with my baptism. The next morning I told my parents that I was going swimming. I met Anna at the bus stop and we took the bus to the mission home where the baptism would take place in the swimming pool. When the missionaries asked for my permission slip I told them that my parents had gone to Macau. Seeing that I was such a faithful and earnest nonmember, they believed me. On August 1, 1958, I was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Following the baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost I realized that I should be honest with my parents. I waited until my mother had gone to bed and then told my father about it. Being an understanding man, he told me that he knew how much I loved the Church and his only request was that I would not do anything to bring shame to the family name.

I am one of those blessed with great enthusiasm for almost everything in life, and missionary work was no exception. I felt I could save the world. My enthusiasm caused me a great deal of trials in my life. The Lutheran school I was attending became very concerned over the lack of attendance in their own Sunday School meetings. Upon further investigations they discovered that Anna and I had been taking our classmates to our church to Sunday School and to MIA. They decided to take action against us.

On Easter Sunday 1960, following the mandatory Sabbath worship for all the students, the principal announced that Anna and I were to come to his office immediately after the meeting. To our astonishment we were advised that we were being expelled from school. No explanation, no consultation with parents; we were just expelled. We were devastated.

We had disgraced our families. When I notified the branch president he called the mission office, and President Taylor sent missionaries to see the principal. Eventually they were told that Anna and I were expelled because we were communists. When evening came and my father was alone I told him what had happened to me in school. My father was disappointed with me but told me not to let my mom know and he went about securing a tutor for both Anna and me. We would meet at the chapel each day for our lessons until my father secured a slot for me in another high school. Eventually my mother found out and I was punished for disobeying her.

Life was not good for me at home. I felt a sense of hopelessness among my relatives, who regarded me as an outcast. At the age of 16 I was set apart as Primary president and that kept me happy in my life. Each day I faced my life with faith in my Heavenly Father, knowing truly that I was His daughter and that He loved me. Just that knowledge alone has helped me to feel my worth and to live each day with hope for a brighter future. As a sacrament meeting chorister I worked with the pianist, Elder Roger Romrell, from Idaho Falls. He could play only eight hymns and every Sunday we sang those eight hymns. Elder Romrell was a very compassionate person and perceptive to my situation. He asked if I would like to go to Idaho to live with his family and finish my education. He said he had five brothers and they had always wanted a sister.

And so at the age of 17, in September 1962, I left Hong Kong. Many of my Primary children came to the airport, and they presented me with a doll. I clutched the doll, left behind a difficult situation, and went on to begin a new life with my hands in the hands of my Heavenly Father. I am grateful for my simple faith that comes from knowing in my heart that Heavenly Father will watch over me. I am not saying that I was not afraid. I cried almost all the way from Hong Kong to Tokyo.

At long last I arrived in the Idaho Falls airport. There the Romrells, along with Sister Long who had served her mission in Hong Kong, met me at the airport and embraced me with love. I felt instantly that I was part of their family. On the way to their home I asked if I could see the Idaho Falls Temple. When I saw the holy temple I felt so much peace and happiness in my heart. I knew I belonged to the true church of God.

In the spring of 1964, when I was a senior at Idaho Falls High School, Dad Romrell was a member of the stake presidency and often had meetings with the Church leaders. During one of his meetings in Salt Lake City, Elder Hinckley asked what my plans were after high school. Dad Romrell told him that I was going to enroll in Ricks College. Elder Hinckley replied, "No, I want Helen to go to Church College of Hawaii where she will meet and marry her own."

When Dad Romrell returned home and told me what Elder Hinckley said, I told him, "I will go to Church College of Hawaii." That summer after my freshman year in college I met a young man of Chinese ancestry, Charles Goo, who was born and raised in Hawaii. He was attending BYU and was home teacher to my friends from Idaho Falls. They told him to look me up when he came home for the summer.

Shortly after we met he was called to serve his mission in Hong Kong. We corresponded for two and a half years and after his mission we were married in the Hawaii Temple. I am grateful for his faith and his commitment to the gospel. Because of that I have had the privilege of supporting him in many Church callings. Serving side by side with my husband has given me opportunities to grow in the gospel. Through these choice experiences I have gained greater love for my Heavenly Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and my brothers and sisters throughout the world. We raised five wonderful children, three daughters and two sons, and each one of them has served a mission. Four of them are married and are married in the temple to worthy individuals. They are the crowning joy in

our lives along with our eight grandchildren. I am thankful for President Hinckley for his love and concern for me. And because I listened and followed his counsel my life has been blessed.

When we choose to exercise our faith we can become instruments in God's hands to bring about His purposes and to bless His children. Roger Romrell exercised his faith in Heavenly Father. A living prophet who was in tune with the Spirit reached out to shake Roger's hand and I became the recipient of that act of faith. I was able to come to America to live and practice my religion without persecution. During my years in Idaho Falls I learned from Mom Romrell's example as a supportive wife to a busy Church leader, and later in my life I found the same joy in supporting a busy husband in his Church assignments. It was not a coincidence that I was led to live with the Romrells. It was by divine intervention that I went there to live and to learn what a Latter-day Saint family is all about. I am grateful for a loving Heavenly Father who knew what training I would need to better prepare for my future. Faith allows miracles like this to happen.

Our living prophet, President Hinckley, desires that we increase in faith. These are the words spoken from his heart to our Heavenly Father on our behalf: "Father, increase our faith. Of all our needs, I think the greatest is an increase in faith. And so, dear Father, increase our faith in Thee, and in Thy Beloved Son, in Thy great eternal work, in ourselves as Thy children, and in our capacity to go and do according to Thy will, and Thy precepts."¹

As I read his prayer I can see in my mind's eyes our beloved prophet at the age of 96 kneeling down by his bed and pouring out his heart to God to implore Him to bless us with an increase in faith. It brought tears to my eyes just to feel that great love President Hinckley has for us. Our prophet knows the increase in faith is needed in our lives as we face the uncertainty of our future in these troubled times. Let us honor our prophet and strive to increase our faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

What Is Faith?

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that faith is "the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness." He explained that faith "is the assurance we have of the existence of unseen things. And being the assurance, . . . [faith] must be the principle of action in all intelligent beings."² President Hinckley observed: "When I discuss faith, I do not mean it in an abstract sense. I mean it as a living, vital force with recognition of God as our Father and Jesus Christ as our Savior. When we accept this basic premise, there will come an acceptance of their teachings and an obedience which will bring peace and joy in this life and exaltation in the life to come."³

Faith in the Chinese language is made up of two characters. The first character is Shun, which means believe. The second character is Sum, which is the heart. In other words, faith comes from a believing heart. We often hear people say, "If your heart is in it you will do fine, but if your heart is not in it you won't succeed."

A believing heart is the motivating force that leads us to do good and to live virtuous lives. Therefore it is extremely important that we nurture our hearts with knowledge of the divinity of our Father in Heaven and the Savior, Jesus Christ. Sisters, we must check our hearts regularly and ask ourselves these questions:

- Do I know that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ live and that they love me?
- Do I know that Jesus Christ died and atoned for my sins?
- Do I know that I am a daughter of God?
- Do I know that God is at the helm and He knows what is best for His children?
- Do I listen to and obey the counsel of our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley?
- Do I live the gospel to the best of my ability?

If by any chance our answers are not affirmative then it is time to humble ourselves and follow these guidelines in the book of Helaman:

“Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Hel. 3:35).

We can reclaim our faith and work toward our eternal progression. The plan of salvation begins with faith and continues by increasing in faith. Every blessing that comes into our lives is the result of exercising our faith in God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

One of my favorite Book of Mormon stories is the account of the 2000 young warriors. These young men told Helaman that they had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. They also added that they did not doubt their mothers knew it (see Alma 56:45–48). I have often wondered what manner of women were their mothers. What did they do to raise their sons with such faith and courage? So great was their faith that it brought down the power of heaven for their protection. I don't have all the answers but I am certain that these women were of great faith and they taught by their examples. I imagine that if they were living today they would show faith in all the programs of the Church, such as Primary, Young Women, and Young Men, by supporting their children in their activities. They would know the scouting program in order to encourage and support their sons to achieve the highest rank of Eagle Scout. They would learn the duties of the offices in the priesthood and see to it their sons perform their duties with exactness as they advance in the priesthood.

If they have daughters I think they would learn the Young Women values with their daughters and align their teachings at home with these values. I am sure they would see to it that they have family prayer daily, family home evening weekly, and scripture studies daily as well. I imagine they would bear their personal testimonies to their children regularly. I am sure they would teach compassion to their children by the many hours of service they perform with joyful hearts.

These faithful converted Lamanite mothers did a marvelous job of instilling faith in their sons, and we salute them for their great achievement . Now it is our turn as we have come for such a time as this. We too will dedicate our lives in bringing up generations of youth who will be worthy sons and daughters of God. As we live our lives with faith in our hearts, our children will recognize our faith and they will not doubt that we know God lives and Jesus is His Son and this Church is true.

Quite a few years ago, a member of our ward, Sister Baker, had a brain tumor and it was announced in church that our ward would fast and pray for her on Monday as she went into surgery. That afternoon at family dinner we discussed fasting as a family on Monday. Our youngest son LeGrand had not fasted for 24 hours before but he too wanted to fast and pray for Sister Baker. On Monday he told his teacher that he wasn't going to eat lunch and so he stayed in the classroom to read while his classmates went to lunch. A couple of months later, when Sister Baker stood in sacrament meeting to announce that she was completely healed and thank the members for their faith on her behalf, our son LeGrand was so excited that upon his return from church he announced to us that his prayers and fasting helped Sister Baker to get all better,. How grateful I am that my children have had many wonderful faith-promoting experiences in their young lives as their anchors. I believe these experiences helped them in developing their faith in God and in themselves.

As daughters of God we can exercise our faith by calling on our loving Heavenly Father for special blessings. If our desires are in harmony with His will, He will grant us the desires of our hearts. By the same token, we exercise our faith in accepting God' will and trust that He knows what is best for us. When I was a young mother with three daughters, I wanted to have sons who would carry the family name in the Church. One day as I was reading in 1 Samuel a thought came to me. Hannah wanted a son and she asked God for a son. I also would like to have sons and I can do what Hannah did and ask the Lord for sons. At the time my husband and I were temple workers for the Cantonese-speaking sessions. One day as I was about to leave the temple I knelt down in the locker room and petitioned my Heavenly Father to bless me with sons, and I promised Him that I would name the first son after the living prophet, Spencer W. Kimball. I also promised my Father in Heaven that I would teach them to dedicate their lives to serving God and keeping His commandments. The following year, in the year of the dragon in the Chinese lunar Calendar, Spencer Milton Yan Loong Goo was born. Seven years later in the year of the boar, LeGrand Charles Yan Ming Goo was born. I am grateful for a loving Heavenly Father who granted me the righteous desires of my heart and now the Goo name will remain faithful and strong in the Church for many generations to come.

I truly believe that with God nothing is impossible. We are the ones who put limits on His miracles because we lack faith in our hearts that He is the all-powerful God. "For if there be no **faith** among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith" (Ether 12:12). Faith precedes miracles.

I live in a magical place in the middle of the Pacific Ocean on an island called Oahu. Our little village is situated on the North Shore. Many mornings when my husband and I go

for our morning walks through our community we are amazed at its serene beauty and peace. Laie was the *Pu'uhonua*, which means a place of refuge. The Aliis, who were the chiefs, had decreed that any criminal who could make his way to Laie would be saved. It was a barren land, with no water. It was doubtful that anyone could survive there for long.

The early Saints came and endured many hardships and some were contemplating leaving. When Joseph F. Smith was serving his third mission there he made this prophetic statement: "My brothers and sisters, do not leave this land, for this place has been chosen by the Lord as a gathering place for the Saints of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Hawaii. Do not complain because of the many trials which come to you because of the barrenness of the land, the lack of water, the scarcity of foods to which you are accustomed, and poverty as well. Be patient, for the day is coming when this land will become a most beautiful land. Water shall spring forth in abundance, and upon the barren land you now see, the Saints will build homes, taro will be planted, and there will be plenty to eat and drink. And upon this place the glory of the Lord will rest to bless the Saints who believe in him and keep his commandments."⁴ With faith in their hearts the Saints remained in Laie. Soon after, true to the prophecy, wells were discovered. A pristine source of pure water, millions of gallons, from the aquifer deep beneath the ground was found. The Laie we see today is the result of the dedication and endurance in faith of the Hawaiian pioneers.

Later on, labor missionaries from all the Pacific Islands as well as the mainland United States came with faith in their hearts to help build the temple, the Church College of Hawaii, and the Polynesian Cultural Center. And these three entities bless our lives in countless ways while they stand as the witness to the world that we worship a living God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Today we see evidence of that same faith in Laie. We have in our midst many senior missionaries and volunteers who have left their children and grandchildren to serve the Lord. They come from all walks of life, armed with years of experiences to serve and to mentor in the university, the PCC, and the temple. With faith in their hearts they go forth to do good among the children of God. And because of their faith and diligence the Lord remembers their families and loved ones at home and He extends His blessings to them as well. They are building a legacy of faith for their posterity and for all of us by their great examples.

To increase our faith simply means to place more trust in God and His Son, Jesus Christ. It means to work harder and do more than what we are doing in service to God and His children. It means listening to the prompting of the Spirit and following that prompting and doing something about it. Our faith will increase when we live up to our Heavenly Father's expectation of us. Increasing our faith will purify our hearts and sanctify our souls and bring us closer to our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Sisters, we may not be called to save a nation as Esther did. But one thing is certain, we are not here by chance but by the will of God. If we are faithful we have a tremendous

role to play in building Zion and preparing for the Second Coming of our Savior. I am grateful for the missionaries who came to Hong Kong with faith in their hearts to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Chinese people. I am thankful for the Romrells for their love for me and for nurturing me in the gospel in my early years in the Church. I consider my membership in this Church as the most significant blessing in my life. It is the fountain from which all my blessings flow. I testify that President Hinckley is a prophet of God and that Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, live.