

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our stake Presidency has asked us to prepare some remarks in lieu of our stake conference this month and I am truly grateful for this opportunity to spend several days pondering and searching for guidance from the Lord in regard to this message.

For any of us who have lived in Texas for more than one spring season, you are familiar with the flash flood rainstorms that seemingly come out of nowhere. A couple years ago I was headed to pick up a child from after school practice when that spring rain hit, that torrential-crazy-fast-down pour Texas type of rain. I was headed east on highway 170 driving next to a big 18-wheeler on my left and a road barrier on my right. I've been splashed on the highway by a semi in the rain before and it's a quick minute where you lose visibility for a second before your wipers catch up. Well, this time it happened on a lengthy stretch of low road and I've lived here long enough to know I was in trouble the minute the water pummeled my windshield. It was as if I was in a tunnel, an underwater tunnel. I had no visibility. I could not see or hear anything but the rushing loud water, it was so loud. It covered me completely. I was keenly aware that a tiny overcorrection in any direction would be really bad. With no senses to rely on and no end in sight, it was as if time had stopped. I had a quick moment of panic and then gripped my steering wheel tight and started my conversation...Lord, I'm listening, what do I do? I've never been so focused on hearing the Spirit more in my entire life. It sounds like a lot of things happening so quickly, but it was all very quick... maybe one second from the initial panic, to my prayer, then feeling overcome with a spirit of calm. In one of the most surreal physical moments of my life the whisperings came to my mind to stay straight and keep the same speed. I felt almost peaceful as I navigated blindly on the highway. I just tightly held on straight ahead, focused and collected. I was in the tunnel for probably about 10 seconds before the road gradually climbed to higher ground, 10 very slow seconds, but naturally it felt like a lifetime.

Flash Flood Focus

Today we are experiencing a crisis that none of us have experienced before. I know many of us are feeling like I did on that road that day. We might feel a little panic from the pressures and the fear in the world around us. We might feel like we can't see in front of us or see an end in sight. Like the outside noise is so loud we can't hear anything else, maybe like time is standing still. We may quite literally feel underwater and lost in how to lead the youth without our normal outlets. I know for me, my emotions are on a bit of a roller coaster. I feel really good until I don't. Lately I have been feeling disconnected and discouraged for various reasons, so the other day I turned on a talk by President Nelson because he always gives me hope. I've noticed in every address he has given since he has become our Prophet, that he talks about personal revelation and the importance of it in our lives. Don't you just love how he talks to us about it? Like we are completely capable to receive revelation and he has full confidence in us! That we just simply need to tap into our potential. I listened to his talk "Hear Him" from last April's general conference and of course it was just what I needed to hear. I was reminded and motivated to find my "flash flood focus".

Just like my experience in the car, now is the time for me to create space away from the outside distraction. To be hyper focused on hearing the voice of the Lord. To find a place to Hear him. Now is the time to let Him know I am listening.

Now is a time where I need to focus on hearing the Spirit more than ever.

Now is the time I need to turn to the Lord to find peace and calm amidst this storm.

The key is that it's up to each of us to make these things happen. President Nelson said, "As we seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our efforts to *hear Him* need to be ever more intentional. It takes conscious and consistent effort to fill our daily lives with His words, His teachings, His truths." (Hear Him, 2020)

He also reminded us that during this time in this particular trial that "It has never been more imperative to know how the Spirit speaks to you than right now. In the Godhead, the Holy Ghost is the messenger. He will bring thoughts to your mind which the Father and Son want you to receive. He is the Comforter. He will bring a feeling of peace to your heart. He testifies of truth and will confirm what is true as you hear and read the word of the Lord." (Hear Him, 2020)

Stay Straight and Keep the speed

During these unusual times, we must do everything we can to stay straight on our course and keep the speed, even if it feels like a really long 10 seconds. Especially when it feels like a really long 10 seconds! As we stay diligent to our covenants and keep the commandments, we can make progress, even in a pandemic!

Let us not lose the ground that we have already gained in our lives spiritually. Let us not lose the ground we have worked hard to cover with our youth.

Further in this talk, President Nelson counsels us to keep the speed with scripture study, worship in the temple, and hearkening to the council of the Prophet and apostles. He also reminds us that when the temple worship is not available to us, we can tap into the blessings of the temple by doing family history research and indexing. This is something I forgot he said. I likely dismissed it because I thought the temples would only be closed of a couple weeks lol...but what great counsel he was inspired to share since we are going on months of the temples being closed now!

I loved this quote from his first address as our prophet in April 2018, "Nothing opens the heavens quite like the combination of increased purity, exact obedience, earnest seeking, daily feasting on the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon, and regular time committed to temple and family history work." (Revelation for the church, Revelation for our lives, 2018).

For me, another way I can stay straight is to trust that the Lord is in charge. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). This pandemic did not take Him by surprise. As plans began to change and things turned upside down in the lives of people I love, it took me many prayers and wearying the Lord to really come to know the Lord has a plan for our children and youth in this time. I learned I needed to *trust* that He will prepare a way, there is no pandemic too big for the Lord!

“I renew my plea for you to do *whatever* it takes to increase your spiritual capacity to receive personal revelation. Doing so will help you know how to move ahead with your life, what to do during times of crisis, and how to discern and avoid the temptations and the deceptions of the adversary.” (President Nelson, Hear Him, 2020).

Gratitude

When the Spirit reminds me of my experience on the highway that day, the first thought I usually have when I remember it is that I am grateful. Yes, I’m grateful to have made it safely home to my family, but lots of people live through scary storms. Once it was all said and done, I’m really grateful to have had that unprecedented quiet 10 seconds with the Lord. I realized that in that time of need I did not doubt or hesitate, I called on Him with perfect faith and a perfect confidence. I wish I could say that was always the case every minute of every day, but I am grateful to have had that short experience where my relationship with Him was more real and tangible than I had known before, like He was a passenger in my car and I fully expected Him to tell me what to do. I am grateful that I did not doubt His presence, but that I knew it.

Sometimes it’s hard to see that someday we could be grateful for a difficult time or trial in our life, but we learn from the scriptures that the Lord has a plan and all things work together for our good (Doctrine and Covenants 98:3), but only if we let them! He will not force us to see circumstances that way, we have to be intentional in looking for things to be grateful for as well.

President Nelson said “To be sure, there may be times when you feel as though the heavens are closed. But I promise that as you continue to be obedient, expressing gratitude for every blessing the Lord gives you, and as you patiently honor the Lord’s timetable, you will be given the knowledge and understanding you seek. Every blessing the Lord has for you—even miracles—will follow.” (Revelation for the church, Revelation for our lives, April 2018)

Help your families and youth find things to be grateful for during this time, even if it’s that it simply gave you a reason to turn to the Lord. Help them recognize that indeed sometimes it takes a storm to lead a heart where it should go, quite literally.

In closing, as I’ve counseled with Young Women leaders throughout the stake on different issues, I find myself repeating “you’ll know what to do”, and when I say it, I completely believe it! I believe it because I have seen the inspiration come time and time again, especially with His

daughters. I hope it helps you to know that we, as a Stake Young Women's presidency have full confidence, like flash flood confidence, that through your own power of personal revelation, you will know how to minister to those you have stewardship over.

"Whatever our Church calling, we can pray to our Heavenly Father and receive guidance and direction, be warned about dangers and distractions, and be enabled to accomplish things we simply could not do on our own. If we will truly receive the Holy Ghost and learn to discern and understand His promptings, we will be guided in matters large and small." (President Nelson, Revelation for the church, Revelation for our lives, April 2018)

I testify that the Lord will inspire our hearts and minds when we focus on hearing Him. I know He can bring peace to our souls and guide our troubled hearts as we intentionally set ourselves up for personal revelation. I know the Lord has a plan for us and we have to put our trust in Him. I know He will guide you specifically and uniquely as leaders and parents, He is the passenger in your car.

And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

~Christi Taylor, Alliance Stake Young Women's President