

My initial talk was centered around analogies, scripture, and reiterating almost every word from the speech it is supposed to be based upon. Instead, I would like to add something like a sequel to this past spring's talk on the power of spiritual momentum given by President Nelson.

Getting on the covenant path, and remaining down this road less traveled has not been easy. No coffee, no teas, no smoking, no illegal drugs, laws of chastity, and a plethora of conventions that are not first practice. Allow me transparency by aligning an origin story with ways I've personally kept up spiritual momentum.

You're surrounded by an environment where vices are abundant. Leadership is self-serving. Hope is non-existent. During sophomore year at your now second high school you can't drop out, because you'll need parent/guardian consent. That makes you reconsider. Opportunities to feel like you matter are far and few. Role models in mentally low places allow you to be your own person, but at the expense of jeopardizing a clean criminal record. The lifestyle you're living lasts long enough to get you kicked out of your home. School is just as oppressive as the neighborhood you ride home to after a long day's work at Goodwill. You switch to a third high school then go back home to live with your family.

By senior year you're working, emancipated, filing head of household, purchasing your third vehicle, rebelling authority, grieving the suicide of peers, getting grillz, getting tatted, reeking mayhem at school and applying to go to college with a 3.78 GPA. Ball State University accepts your application after three ACT attempts.

These four and a half years were mentally, emotionally, and financially tumultuous. Had issues getting to sleep due to the sheer peace and quiet allotted in your dorm room. You started an organization, Men in Education. Moved off campus. Party more. Delved into vices...bad habits force your survival instincts to kick in...you're working, pawning items, living with your aunt, giving plasma donations, even sleeping in the car for nights on end at Windermere Apartments parking lot.

Student teaching, what you think is the final stage before you catch your big break, is a dead end. Going to your placement is impossible after your car loses the transmission, the lead educator is stonewalling you, and you've had a part-time job since you were 15 years old, so you can't align your focus, because you're going straight into work after dealing with elementary students all day. More jobs, different addresses, you're going mad. Uncontrollable transitions keep reoccurring. This is your life. You must get on the covenant path!

You can't because you're distracted. Vices still haunt you. The crutches are women, Fireball, marijuana, and you're fighting a Xanax addiction. Escapism. You pass out instead of falling asleep. You rollover instead of waking up. Not wanting to be in the moment. Unable to care about how your actions are impacting others. This stage isn't easy; for there seems to be no solution. Religious leaders have questioned your virginity in front of congregations, called out your family for visiting other churches, ghosted you, and led with judgment. Traveling becomes

your outlet. Seeing new places opens your mind, gives you experience...allows you much practice balling on a budget.

Grad School is a drastic difference from what you expected. Discrimination exists even at the level of attaining an advanced degree. Urban and Regional Planning isn't educating your peer group to lead communities, empathize, or impact the regressive/suppressive ways of those without a voice in which you are supposed to represent. At this point you're in the latter years of your 20's. Still looking for that spark that allows consistency. Allows you to be able to settle down. Paying thousands of dollars to get back into school over three times ain't going how it's supposed to be going. You aren't allowed to take enough courses to raise your 2.98 GPA due to being on academic probation, but also can't continue or graduate with a GPA below a 3.00.

Meanwhile, your credits are expiring. This cycle is driving you insane. Everything within this environment seems to be less than your potential. Moving around isn't working, so maybe seeking employment in this sector via AmeriCorps is the way to succeed, even after heading neighborhood organizations, mentoring, and other community driven successes.

You aim to excel at this internship. Living and working in an environment you've been in the majority of your life can cause complacency. Comfort within what is familiar. You should follow the path Heavenly Father is beckoning since you're transfixed on becoming better than the person you were. The calling to take a leap of faith is much louder now than the noise of distractions. Here is where those series of moments of adversity accumulate into fearless faith.

By the time a job offer was presented across the country you had already had nearly 30 jobs, 20+ addresses, accomplished 10 years of vegetarianism, survived a global pandemic, lost your father, been to half of the United States, taught at every level except collegiately, and been out of the country twice. Examining the man in the mirror; I had gained spiritual momentum from these experiences. I was fed up and made a change! I took the leap of faith.

Moving across the country indefinitely is a hard concept to process. It is even more difficult bringing the concept into fruition. While driving I constantly prayed that I would at least find a bible study to commit to once per week. When my job began, there were many missionaries on our property. Many of them would non-verbally say "hello". Some would speak. As winter approached the new environment began to grow normal. Work, chill, sleep, repeat. Work, chill, sleep, repeat.

One day, this very unassuming young lady approached, "What are you doing there...?" Her companion began to enclose in our proximity. I responded, "fixing things." We exchanged small talk. I began to tell them about my journey. I had hoped to stop a missionary before to inquire about bible study, but simply never did. Sister Lee and Sister Staker divulged that they were missionaries. We had lessons. The covenant path intrigued me. I began by giving up coffee. Then tea. Just to test myself. Then I gave up the occasional drink of alcohol to "wind down" after a long day. This was starting to make me feel full. Then I quit smoking with ease. Something special was occurring. I felt accomplished. More mindful when talking to others. I had an

overwhelming appreciation of smaller blessings that I had once taken for granted. Their words were true!

Then I visited the church. I appreciated that the congregation were responsible for providing sermons on Sundays like the one I'm giving now. I liked taking the sacrament every week. There wasn't an anxiety-filled altar call in front of everyone at the end of our meeting. I liked that this church didn't incidentally shame members by publicly collecting tithes & offerings. I took a temple tour ...it was the icing on the cake!

It was time to continue the upswing of momentum I had developed. Our church felt truer the more my self-discipline grew stronger. The more I learned about Heavenly Father and how he operates the more I felt so inclined to request a baptism date. Baptism, to me, is a physical representation of beginning anew. It acts as a tangible illustration of keeping the promise to endure until the end.

These incremental steps make me recall Jeremiah 29:11;

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."

My spiritual momentum continued. I've been able to participate in baptism for the dead, baptize others, and attend the General Conference in which this speech is based upon. I saw the speech live! It was dope!

Anyhow, I want to be better than I was the day before, month before, year before. Finding ways for self-betterment isn't the easiest when you have such high expectations for yourself. Small failures become so overwhelming. Realizing that there is a bigger picture helps. Spending time in a prayer closet focusing on daily repentance has also helped me keep up this momentum. Understanding how human I am is joyful. I thought I had to be perfect for people. Perfect for myself.

[Read 1 NEPHI 8:7-24]

Life is much like the tree of life now. I want to show everyone the path as well as share the fruit. Most won't understand. Even fewer will not listen to their calling. As easily as you can wander off the path, you can wander back onto it. In this past spring's talk one of the suggestions to keep spiritual momentum was to end conflict in your personal life. Specifically, the verse quoted was Matthew 6:14;

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Forgive yourself past the mist of darkness. Forgive yourself to become greater. Level up! You can! You will! You are someone's missionary! Listen.

My upkeep of spiritual momentum has continued by getting on the covenant path and remaining down this road less traveled, learning how Heavenly Father operates, finding joy in humanizing myself through daily repentance, and ending conflict within myself as well as with others.

Lastly, the only thing that has gotten me this far is keeping my faith by seeking and expecting miracles. This is the last, yet most important, suggestion to keep your spiritual momentum on the upswing. Without the miracles expected from our Savior I would be a fearful, negative minded, disobedient adolescent, but simply older in age. Without any progress.

I'd like to quote the closing given by President Nelson, "As you act on these pursuits, I promise you the ability to move forward on the covenant path with increased momentum, despite whatever obstacles you face. And I promise you greater strength to resist temptation, more peace of mind, freedom from fear, and greater unity in your families.

God lives! Jesus is the Christ! He lives! He loves us and will help us. Of this I testify in the sacred name of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen."