

Enter Your Courage Zone: Missions and Scouting

By Monte F. Shelley

9 March 1995

Rappelling

Last summer, my son, Jon, was concerned about leaving home, friends, and the ward to go to BYU. I asked how he had felt the first time he went rappelling. I expected him to say he was a little scared until he got used to it. Then I would point out how leaving home to go to BYU was like rappelling.

However, Jon surprised me by saying “Dad, let’s go rappelling!” Within 30 minutes I was looking over a 90 foot cliff wondering what I had done! I had been teaching my kids: “*To improve, you must leave your Comfort Zone and enter your Courage Zone.*” Now it was time for me to put up or shut up.

Jon and his friend Orrin put on some nice padded harnesses. Then Orrin gave me a web strap that was six feet long and one inch wide. For my harness he wrapped the web strap around my legs and waist. Then he tied a few knots. I checked the knots very carefully! I watched Orrin tie the rope through some chains bolted into the rock. Then Jon went down first to show me *how easy* it was.

Soon I was trying to kneel on the edge so I could back off. I would have to fall a foot and then swing over before the rope would support me. I asked Jon several times if he was ready on the safety rope. I reminded him that he needed me to pay his tuition. I asked if they were still my friends. I wondered if this was my Crazy Zone instead of my Courage Zone!

After what seemed like forever, I went off the edge and felt myself falling down and over. I was very relieved when I stopped falling and was just hanging on the side of the cliff. Soon I was very slowly going down the cliff.

I went down three more times that day. Each time it was easier. Rappelling was *slowly moving* from my Courage Zone to my Comfort Zone. Jon and Orrin gave me two compliments. First, they

knew very few men who would try this the first time at *my age*. And second, this cliff was not a good one for beginners!

I had asked Jon to tell me how it felt to rappel the first time. He invited me to experience the first time. Instead of just explaining the gospel, *invite and entice* people to experience the gospel.

To expand my Comfort Zone, I had to enter my Courage Zone. I needed *faith* in the rope, in the knots, in the harness, in Jon on the safety line, in my ability to learn, and in the promptings I had felt to say yes.

As you enter your Courage Zone, remember the Lord’s counsel: “*Look unto me in every thought; doubt not; fear not*” (D&C 6:36). As a missionary, you will have leaders, companions, rules, and the Holy Ghost to help you. When you return, the language, the people, the country, and missionary work will be part of your Comfort Zone.

Scouting: Missionary Preparation

Scouting helps young men prepare for missions by taking them into the Courage Zone. You learn that you can be happy sleeping in a tent and eating your own cooking. You also learn that you can survive and be happy without Mom, Dad, beds, indoor bathrooms, kitchens, telephones, television, videos, music, and Nintendo.

When we took scouts downhill skiing for the first time, the beginners fell a lot. But falling is part of learning something new. Because Jon likes to try unfamiliar and challenging slopes, he falls a lot and improves. Life and learning a foreign language are like skiing. *If you are not falling down, you are not learning and improving.*

When the scouts hiked 50 miles in less than 20 hours, Jon learned that he could set a very difficult goal and achieve it with the help of others. He also learned the joy of helping others and of having others help him in the middle of

the night. On another long backpack, the scouts often asked, "How much farther?" Each time the answer was "only two more miles." It seems easier to go two miles 25 times than to go 50 miles. When things get difficult on your mission, *remember the 50/20 and "only two more miles."* Others will be there to help you and others will need your help.

One year we took the scouts on a three night backpacking trip into the High Uintah mountains. After hiking two miles we set up camp in the rain. The next morning we saw a lady walking barefoot down the trail. We assumed she was camping near by. Several hours and miles later we caught up with her. She was wet and cold. We recognized that she had hypothermia and was dehydrated. We sent most of the scouts to Pinto Lake to set up camp. Some stayed to help her while two hiked back about four miles to get help. When the park rangers arrived to help her, they told us that we had probably saved her life. They also told us that a 19-year-old boy drowned the day before in a nearby lake. While swimming in the cold lake, his muscles cramped. He was a good swimmer who hadn't expected his muscles to cramp. He was a friend from our stake.

On that same hike, a scout ignored the counsel of leaders. He took a backpack that weighed more than 30% of his body weight. After several miles of steep climbing, he was really hurting. Several scouts volunteered to carry some of his things.

Like physical death and pain, spiritual death and pain are real and can often be avoided by following some basic rules. When we break those rules, some will say: "The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand ... for his punishments are just" (Mosiah 4:17). However, the Lord expects us to *stop on the trail of life and help those who need us physically or spiritually*. Baptism shows that we are "willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light" (Mosiah 18:8).

On our 10-mile return hike, the Scout leaders decided to take an unfamiliar trail. We had to trust our maps, our compasses, and our ability to recognize where we were. On another hike, we

could not tell where we were even with a good map and compasses. I would have preferred a guide who knew the trail instead of maps and compasses. As the Liahona guided Nephi in the wilderness, *the Holy Ghost will guide you on the unfamiliar trails of life.*

Holy Ghost Will Guide You

Even with the Holy Ghost as your guide, you will have problems. Nephi said "we did travel and wade through *much affliction* in the wilderness; ... And if ... the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth *nourish* them, and *strengthen* them, and *provide means* whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them." (1 Nephi 17:1,3). "*The gospel is not insurance against pain and suffering. It is a resource to help you in times of pain and suffering.*" (Carlfred Broderick, *The Uses of Adversity*)

The Holy Ghost "will show unto you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:5) and "bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26) to help you solve your problems. After you've done everything you can think of to solve a problem, you, like Nephi, may be "led by the Spirit, not knowing before hand the things which [you] should do" (1 Nephi 4:6). "*Feast upon the words of Christ*" (2 Nephi 32:3) and "*yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit*" (Mosiah 3:19). As you seek to know and do Christ's will, your faith will increase and the Holy Ghost will be your constant companion.

The prophets have said that every worthy and able young man should go on a mission. As you enter your Courage Zone, remember the Lord's counsel and promises.

Go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know ... he shall prepare a way. (1 Nephi 3:7)

Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers. (D&C 112:10)

Search diligently, pray always, and be believing and *all things shall work together for your good* if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant. (D&C 90:24)

Jesus is the Christ. He daily communicates his will to each of us through *his voice*, the Holy

Ghost (Acts 1:2). After baptism, we were commanded to *receive the Holy Ghost* or in other words to *hear and obey* his promptings. Those who hear and obey his will are his servants. The promptings of the Holy Spirit will often lead you into your Courage Zone. In your Courage Zone, your faith in Christ will increase because *you will see his hand most clearly during difficult times*.

Not Easy, but Worth It

During their mission, Ammon and his brothers “had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit” (Alma 17:5). In the wilderness, their “hearts were depressed and [they] were about to turn back” when the Lord comforted them saying: “Go amongst ... the Lamanites, and *bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success*” (Alma 26:27). *The Lord did not say it would be easy. He said it would be worth it!* They showed their faith in Christ by hearing and obeying his voice. They *invited and enticed* many people to come unto Christ. When they returned after their 14-year mission, Alma said:

They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had *searched the scriptures diligently*, that they might know the word of God. ... They had given themselves to *much prayer, and fasting*; therefore *they had the spirit* of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, *they taught with power and authority of God*. (Alma 17:2-3)

Years later the Gadianton robbers “did obtain the sole management of the government” (Helaman 6:39). The prophet Nephi “did preach the word of God” unto the people and “they did reject all his words” (Helaman 7:2). As Nephi went toward his house pondering and “being much cast down because of the wickedness of the Nephites ... a voice came unto him saying:”

Blessed art thou, Nephi, for ... thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.

And now, because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and

in works; yea, ... all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will. (Helaman 10:3-5)

This great blessing did not come because Nephi was baptizing thousands of people. It came because he was seeking to know and do the will of the Lord without fear of the people.

If you are “called to pass through tribulation ... [and] perils” (D&C 122:5) like Ammon and Nephi, remember:

All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? (D&C 122:7)

Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. (D&C 59:7)

Most people thank the Lord for the *blessings they enjoy*. Some also thank him for the *blessings they do not enjoy!*

On your mission, the Holy Ghost will bring to your remembrance the lessons you learned each time you entered your Courage Zone.

Enter Your Courage Zone

To fulfill our own life missions, *the Lord will often lead us or push us into our Courage Zones*. Our mission may be a two-year Church mission to preach the gospel or a lifetime mission to “*establish his righteousness*” (JST Matt. 6:33) in our families, and neighborhoods. Church callings invite us to enter our Courage Zone. As we accept and fulfill our callings, our Comfort Zone will expand. When we begin to feel comfortable, we receive a new calling to enter our Courage Zone.

The Lord will bless each of us the same as he blessed his servants in times past **if** we also *exercise our faith* in Christ by seeking to *know and do his will*. As we seek to “keep the commandments of God he doth *nourish* [us], and *strengthen* [us], and *provide means* whereby [we] can accomplish the thing which he has commanded [us]” (1 Nephi 17:1,3). *He does not say it will be easy in our Courage Zones. He only says it will be worth it and that he will help us!*

(This is an edited version of a talk given May 8, 1994, at the Missionary Farewell for his son, Jon.)