

**“Strength from Grace: Faithful LDS Women
Despair Does Not Look Good on Me, I’m Choosing to Wear the Atonement”**

Carol M. Stephens
First Counselor, Relief Society General Presidency

This address was given Friday, May 2, 2014 at the BYU Women’s Conference

© 2014 by Brigham Young University Women’s Conference. All rights reserved

For further information write:

BYU Women’s Conference

161 Harman Continuing Education Building

Provo, Utah 84602

801-422-7692

E-mail: womens_conference@byu.edu

Home page: <http://womensconference.byu.edu>

I recently learned of a woman who is learning first-hand what grace looks like. As a result of her experience, she has quickly learned that despair does not look good on her—so she is choosing instead to wear the Atonement. With her permission, I’d like to share with you some of her experience, feelings, and choices:

[Our son’s] mission call and his farewell next week have been postponed for now. Our family will need and appreciate all the prayers, hope, love, kindness, cheering and support you can send our way.

As we’ve worked through this bump in our family’s road, I’ve come to realized that some of my reactions to my husband, my children, and others around me are distorted and unhealthy when I let negative emotions reside in my soul. And I really don’t love myself or how I feel when I do this.

So I’ve made a decision! I am not going to allow these emotions to stick around! I have no time or energy for a pity party (And trust me, I have been a professional pity partier).

I am allergic to despair, anxiety, depression, fear, worry, insomnia, sadness, anger, doubt and guilt. They just don’t look good on me.

Neither do the dark circles under my eyes *or* my hips and thighs when I find myself constantly putting food in my mouth to make it all better.

All of these negative emotions do not feel good to me, so I am *choosing* to move on happily. I’m *choosing* to access the strength and enabling power available to me because of Him, My Savior.

I feel stronger each day as I access His grace, His mercy and His love. This divine help enables me every step of the way as I navigate through this experience.

I am learning that repentance, second chances, hope, redemption, mercy, love, and goodness are *all* part of the Lord's great plan of happiness—for *all* of us, especially me.

I do find I am very attracted to sunshine, laughter,

joy, the “sunny side,” beauty.

Hope, peace, strength, a Prophet's voice.

Prayer, the Spirit, the divine,

light, goodness, service,

love, mercy, forgiveness.

The Savior, energy, the scriptures,

my Father in Heaven, work, children,

triumph, a restful night's sleep

and virtue.

I *choose* to spend my life and time devoted to seeking out and spending time with these things in my *heart*, in my *mind*, and in my *life*.

I myself am feeling very peaceful, supported, and strong. Prayer and the scriptures are a great source of strength to me. I read this morning from Alma, “And I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind . . . and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered me . . . and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me” (Alma 36:27).

Elder David A. Bednar taught, “Each of us . . . carries a load. Our individual load is comprised of demands and opportunities, obligations and privileges, afflictions and blessings, and options and constraints. . . . Sometimes we mistakenly believe that happiness is the absence of a load. But bearing a load is a necessary and essential part of the plan of happiness.

“The Savior said: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

“In essence, the Savior is beckoning us to rely upon [Him] and to pull together with Him . . .”
(David A. Bednar, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign*, May 2014).

This faithful sister is learning to “trust in and pull [her] load with Him”—with the Savior—as she navigates this bump in their family road. Through this experience she is learning, “truly His yoke is easy and His burden is light” (Bednar, “Bear Up”).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.