

## Episode 28

### Stories from General Conference

#### ATTITUDE, VOL. 2

**NARRATOR:** **This is collection number two on the topic of Attitude in this series of “Stories from General Conference”, here on the Mormon Channel.**

**Attitude is a reflection of how we feel about others or our circumstances. A positive attitude can bring a sense of hope and optimism into a world that desperately needs it.**

**There is too much trouble, pain and heartache in the world to let our attitudes make things worse. A positive attitude is contagious and brings a sense of optimism.**

**We must keep a positive outlook on life and focus on what’s most important. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf shared an example in the April 2009 General Conference about consequences that can result if we are distracted by the wrong things.**

(President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Saturday Afternoon Session, April 2009)

On a dark December night 36 years ago, a Lockheed 1011 jumbo jet crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing over 100 people. This terrible accident was one of the deadliest crashes in the history of the United States.

A curious thing about this accident is that all vital parts and systems of the airplane were functioning perfectly—the plane could have easily landed safely at its destination in Miami, only 20 miles (32km) away.

During the final approach, however, the crew noticed that one green light had failed to illuminate—a light that indicates whether or not the nose landing gear has extended successfully. The pilots discontinued the approach, set the aircraft into a circling holding pattern over the pitch-black Everglades, and turned their attention toward investigating the problem.

They became so preoccupied with their search that they failed to realize the plane was gradually descending closer and closer toward the dark swamp below. By the time someone noticed what was happening, it was too late to avoid the disaster.

After the accident, investigators tried to determine the cause. The landing gear had indeed lowered properly. The plane was in perfect mechanical condition. Everything was working properly—all except one thing: a single burned-out lightbulb. That tiny bulb—worth about 20 cents—started the chain of events that ultimately led to the tragic death of over 100 people.

Of course, the malfunctioning lightbulb didn't cause the accident; it happened because the crew placed its focus on something that seemed to matter at the moment while losing sight of what mattered most.

**NARRATOR:**

**Proper attitudes ensure proper priorities so our efforts are not focused on things less important. This can cause crucial errors in the direction of our lives.**

**Attitudes can be shaped by learning to heed warning signs in our lives. In the October 1999 General Conference, Elder Neil L. Andersen shared an analogy about heeding early warning signs to avoid disastrous consequences later.**

(Elder Neil L. Andersen, Saturday Morning Session, October 1999)

In our world today, one thing has not changed since Joshua spoke: Those who choose to serve the Lord will always listen attentively and specifically to the Prophet. In modern Israel, serving the Lord means carefully following the Prophets.

The challenges that face us and our families as disciples of Christ are somewhat different than those of Joshua's Israelites. Let me illustrate with an experience. Our family lived for many years in the state of Florida. Because Florida has a high concentration of sand, lawns there are planted with a large broadleaf grass we call Saint Augustine. A formidable enemy of a Florida lawn is a small, brown insect called a mole cricket.

One evening as my neighbor and I stood on the front steps, he noticed a little bug crossing my sidewalk. "You better spray your lawn," he warned. "There goes a mole cricket." I had sprayed the lawn with insecticide not too many weeks previously, and I hardly felt that I had the time or money to do it again so soon.

In the light of the next morning, I examined my lawn closely. It was lush and beautifully green. I looked down into the grass to see if I could see any of the little bugs. I could see none. I remember thinking, "Well, maybe that little mole cricket was just passing through my yard on the way to my neighbor's yard."

I watched my lawn for more than a week, looking for signs of invaders, but none was evident. I congratulated myself that I had not overreacted to my neighbor's warning.

The story, however, has a sad ending. I came out the front door one morning, about 10 days after the conversation with my neighbor. Shockingly, as if it had happened overnight, brown spots covered my lawn. I ran to the garden store, bought the insecticide,

and sprayed immediately, but it was too late. The lawn was ruined, and to return it to its former state required a new crop of sod, long hours of work, and large expense.

My neighbor's warning was central to my lawn's welfare. He saw things I could not see. He knew something I did not know. He knew that mole crickets live underground and are active only at night, making my daytime examinations ineffective. He knew that mole crickets did not eat the leaves of the grass but rather found nourishment in the roots. He knew that these little inch-long creatures could eat a lot of roots before I would ever see the effect above the ground. I paid a dear price for my smug independence.

**NARRATOR:**

**As we heed warning signs and work to create an attitude of obedience, the rewards can be great. When our attitude is selfish it brings only *temporary* satisfaction. President James E. Faust shared a story that illustrated this principle in the October 2002 General Conference:**

(President James E. Faust, Priesthood Session, October 2002)

Church history includes incidents of priesthood holders of great capacity. A few were brilliant but also erratic and unreliable and so lost the spiritual gifts and talents with which the Lord had so richly endowed them. I would like to tell you about one such.

Samuel Brannan led some Saints around Cape Horn on the ship *Brooklyn*. They made a brief stop in Hawaii before docking at San Francisco Bay. He became convinced that the main body of the Saints should not settle in the Rocky Mountains but should go on to California. So he traveled east and encountered the first party of emigrants under the leadership of Brigham Young in Green River, Wyoming. He used all of his persuasive powers trying to convince Brigham Young to take advantage of the opportunities which he felt California offered. Brigham Young responded, "Let us go to California, and we cannot stay there over five years; but let us stay in the mountains, and we can raise our own potatoes, and eat them; and I calculate to stay here." Brannan stayed with the main body of the Saints for a few days, but then, because he was headstrong and self-centered, in August of 1847 he headed back to California.

. . . Sam Brannan was not focused on building up the kingdom of God. Instead he was directed toward business and making money. He became the first millionaire in California, with numerous business ventures and extensive land holdings. Because he had been the leader of that group of Saints, President Young asked him to account for the tithing that he had collected from the members of the Church in California, including those involved in the gold rush, but he did not do so. Nor did he use those funds to establish the Church or to help the members there.

For a time and a season, Brannan was very successful in establishing enterprises and acquiring land for his own benefit, but eventually he fell on hard times. His family did not stay together. When he died he was alone, broken physically, spiritually, and financially. For 16 months no one claimed his body. Eventually it was placed in San

Diego's Mount Hope Cemetery. Sam Brannan accomplished much in his life, but in the end he paid a terrible price for not honoring his priesthood stewardship and having failed to follow the prophet of God.

**NARRATOR: You're listening to "Stories from General Conference", collection number two, on the topic of attitude, here on the Mormon Channel.**

**One aspect of creating a good attitude is to take better advantage of the resources around us, instead of seeking those not so easily obtained. In the October 2001 General Conference, Elder Steven E. Snow shared a story that illustrates this principle.**

(Elder Steven E. Snow, Priesthood Session, October 2001)

Growing up in southern Utah, some of us sought employment at the many gasoline service stations that lined old Highway 91 as it made its way through downtown St. George. My younger brother, Paul, then 18, worked at Tom's Service, a station located about three blocks from our home.

One summer day, a car with New York license plates pulled in the station and asked for a fill-up. (For you brethren under the age of 30, in those days someone actually came out and filled your car with gas, washed your windows, and checked your oil.) While Paul was washing the windshield, the driver asked him how far it was to the Grand Canyon. Paul replied that it was 170 miles.

"I've waited all my life to see the Grand Canyon," the man exclaimed. "What's it like out there?"

"I don't know," Paul answered, "I've never been there."

"You mean to tell me," the man responded, "that you live two and a half hours from one of the seven wonders of the world and you've never been there!"

"That's right," Paul said.

After a moment, the man replied, "Well, I guess I can understand that. My wife and I have lived in Manhattan for over 20 years, and we've never visited the Statue of Liberty."

"I've been there," Paul said.

Isn't it ironic, brethren, that we will often travel many miles to see the wonders of nature or the creations of man, but yet ignore the beauty in our own backyard?

It is human nature, I suppose, to seek elsewhere for our happiness. Pursuit of career goals, wealth, and material rewards can cloud our perspective and often leads to a lack of appreciation for the bounteous blessings of our present circumstances.

It is precarious to dwell on why we have not been given more. It is, however, beneficial and humbling to dwell on why we have been given so much.

An old proverb states, "The greater wealth is contentment with a little."

**NARRATOR: Our attitudes can make a great difference in what we accomplish. There is an old saying, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right." Postive attitudes will allow our Heavenly Father to use you in accomplishing His purposes. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf shared a personal story about how a positive attitude changed his life.**

(Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Saturday Afternoon Session, October 2006)

Let me share with you a personal experience from my own youth about the power of righteous motives.

After the turmoil of the Second World War, my family ended up in Russian-occupied East Germany. When I attended fourth grade I had to learn Russian as my first foreign language in school. I found this quite difficult because of the Cyrillic alphabet, but as time went on I seemed to do all right.

When I turned 11 we had to leave East Germany overnight because of the political orientation of my father. Now I was going to school in West Germany, which was American-occupied at that time. There in school all children were required to learn English and not Russian. To learn Russian had been difficult, but English was impossible for me. I thought my mouth was not made for speaking English. My teachers struggled. My parents suffered. And I knew English was definitely not my language.

But then something changed in my young life. Almost daily I rode my bicycle to the airport and watched airplanes take off and land. I read, studied, and learned everything I could find about aviation. It was my greatest desire to become a pilot. I could already picture myself in the cockpit of an airliner or in a military fighter plane. I felt deep in my heart this was my thing!

Then I learned that to become a pilot I needed to speak English. Overnight, to the total surprise of everybody, it appeared as if my mouth had changed. I was able to learn English. It still took a lot of work, persistence, and patience, but I was able to learn English!

Why? Because of a righteous and strong motive!

**NARRATOR: We can do most things we put our mind to. A positive attitude will take us a long way. There is a magic attraction to one who loves life and finds joy in every moment.**

**May we all work on developing a positive attitude and an optimistic approach to life.**

**This has been “Stories from General Conference”, collection number two, on the topic of attitude. Thank you for listening to the Mormon Channel. For more information on the Mormon Channel, go to [radio.lds.org](http://radio.lds.org).**