

**What do you do
when church leaders
give talks that are
painful?**

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By Anita Ervin

What do you do when church leaders give talks that are painful?

- Acknowledge and honor your pain
- Give yourself time to process
- Avoid making big decisions in the middle of the pain
- Seek understanding
- Extend grace
- Focus on the Savior

LIFT + LOVE

Acknowledge and honor your pain.

It's okay to acknowledge that church leaders said something that caused you pain. And it's important to allow yourself to feel it without judgment. Sometimes, as members of the church, we think that in order to be "all in" the gospel we need to be 100% behind what every church leader says from every pulpit. That is simply not true.

Give yourself time to process

Sometimes the best way to process something is to let it fall to the back of your mind for a while. It's not going to go away, but it doesn't have to consume all of your attention. If the talk was given during General Conference, focus on the talks that were healing, uplifting, or inspiring. Give your mind and your heart time to come to terms with the words and the manner in which they were said.

Avoid making big decisions in the middle of the pain

It can be tempting to react or make big decisions when we are reeling from a painful talk. These could be decisions about church or family relationships. But we don't have to be reactive. Wait to make big decisions until you feel like you can come from a place of love, not hurt or anger.

Seek understanding

Author Doe Zantamata wrote, "It's easy to judge. It's more difficult to understand. Understanding requires compassion, patience, and a willingness to believe that good hearts sometimes choose poor methods. Through judging we separate. Through understanding, we grow." Understanding often requires us to look past the words that were said to the person who spoke them. It may require us to move closer, not distance ourselves from them. If you don't feel safe enough or ready to move closer, you can take a step back instead. Try to see the bigger picture of their words over time. Read some of their other talks about different topics, or even review other sections of the talk they gave that was painful. Try to see who they are and how they have shown love in situations not relating to this particular pain point...

Extend grace

Extending grace doesn't mean we have to be okay with what someone says (or the manner in which they say it). It means that we strive to withhold judgment or condemnation of the person behind the words. It means acknowledging that they are mortal and flawed and imperfect – just like us. It means giving them the benefit of the doubt and assuming goodwill when possible. And sometimes it also means recognizing that they may continue to say things that are hurtful and giving yourself permission to avoid those situations.

Focus on the Savior

The leaders of the church may be called to serve and represent the Lord, but they are not Him. More than anyone else who has lived on this earth, the Savior knows our pain and can comfort us in our sorrows. His love is pure and unconditional and healing. When we feel the Savior's affirming love in our lives, it can give us the strength to keep pressing forward on the path He wants us to travel. Hold fast to the Savior and don't let go. He is our Advocate in every sense of the word.

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