

Lift Up Thine Eyes to the Mountains

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I am humbled by the invitation to speak today. As I have prepared my remarks, I have had particularly in mind the 900 new freshmen who arrived on campus less than two weeks ago. The rest of you will, I hope, find something of value in what I say, but I especially pray that I can help the youngest students among us understand some of the unique opportunities that lie before you.

I have entitled my remarks “Lift Up Thine Eyes to the Mountains.” This title was inspired by an experience I had two years ago. I like to vacation in the mountains, yet the summer of 1999 was the first time I had ever traveled to nearby Wyoming to visit the Grand Tetons. A friend and I arrived at the national park in the late afternoon. As we drove along the park road to get closer to those majestic peaks, we noticed an area where we could pull off and read signs telling us the names and geologic history of the mountains. As we stood outside the car, drinking in the beauty of the scene, a van pulled off the road and parked beside our car, and a couple probably in their early forties got out to admire the mountains, too.

I noticed that the license plate on their van indicated they were from one of the flat midwestern states, and I thought perhaps the mountains would be especially awe-inspiring

to them. As I turned to go back to the car, I noticed in the rear of their van two teenaged boys—presumably the sons of this couple—seated with their backs to the Grand Tetons and showing absolutely no interest in looking at them. One boy had headphones on and his eyes shut, apparently caught up in whatever he was listening to. The other had his nose in a magazine, doggedly reading, seemingly oblivious to the beauty that surrounded him.

Now I don’t know why these two boys were ignoring the view; maybe it was the last day of their trip and they had already seen enough. But, unfairly or not, I imagined that they had come on vacation at their parents’ insistence, and now, just to show how cool they were, they were refusing to be impressed by the sights their parents had brought them to see.

As I drove away from this family, I thought that many of us often behave in the way these boys did: There are inspiring things our Father in Heaven wants to show us and wonderful experiences He wants to give us, yet we are so absorbed in trivial, worldly interests that we sometimes turn our backs to the thrilling

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views of eternity that are available if we would only lift up our eyes and see.

Today my desire is to help us all lift up our eyes and see the heights to which we may aspire if we will take full advantage of the opportunities offered us here. Brigham Young University exists in large part to help The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints fulfill its mission. The mission of the university, as stated in this little blue booklet, “is to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life.” The mission statement declares that “all students at BYU should be taught the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any education is inadequate which does not emphasize that His is the only name given under heaven whereby mankind can be saved” (*The Mission of Brigham Young University and The Aims of a BYU Education* [Provo: BYU, 1996], 1). As President Spencer W. Kimball said in a 1967 address, BYU should provide “education for eternity.” The faculty here, he stated, have a double heritage and a double responsibility to preserve and teach not only the knowledge of men but “the revealed truths sent from heaven” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Education for Eternity,” in *Speeches of the Year, 1967* [Provo: BYU, 1968], 2).

Included with the mission statement in the blue booklet are *The Aims of a BYU Education*, approved by the board of trustees in 1995. A BYU education should “be (1) spiritually strengthening, (2) intellectually enlarging, and (3) character building, leading to (4) lifelong learning and service” (*Mission and Aims*, 3). We faculty members are frequently encouraged to read this booklet and to incorporate the four aims into our teaching. Yet I wonder how often students take the time to read and ponder the words that elaborate on the four aims. I hope that you will read the complete statement of the mission and aims. They are available on the Internet as a link from the BYU homepage and are also printed in the catalog. I recommend you read them at least once a semester to remind yourself

of the higher goals you should have beyond merely passing courses and accumulating credits for graduation.

To me, each of these aims is like a mountain peak—or, more accurately, each is like a facet of a single towering mountain that we are invited not only to look at but to climb. In many ways we faculty can only do like the parents in the story I related. We can bring you students to the mountain, we can encourage you, and we can try to model the behavior that we hope you will choose. But you must make the effort to lift up your eyes and then to scale the peak through your diligence. This university will achieve its divine destiny only as faculty, staff, and students unite and help each other in the climb upward.

I wish to speak about each of the four aims, suggesting things that may help us ascend together. I propose that in striving to achieve the aims of a BYU education, you will simultaneously be advancing in your quest for perfection and eternal life—a quest that we must always remember is made possible only through the love and the Atonement of the Savior.

Building Character

I will start with the third aim of “character building” for reasons that I think will become clear. For centuries the ultimate goal of education in Western civilization was the formation of students’ character. True, in each period of the past students were taught what was known in every branch of learning. But they were taught such things as oratory, languages, philosophy, literature, music, and mathematics to increase their wisdom and judgment and to enable them to serve their societies. Education was to engender virtue, and the morality of students was the constant concern of most teachers from ancient Greece through the first hundred-plus years of the United States. In this country up until about 1890, the last course that students took at college was moral philosophy, a course considered so important it was usually taught by the college president (see Jeffrey R.

Holland, *A "Notion" at Risk*, pamphlet of address given at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., 22 March 1984, 7–8). Very few universities now attempt anything in the way of molding students' character. Most have capitulated to the relatively recent belief that the goal of higher education is to specialize in some area of learning so that one has the credentials to get a job and earn money—preferably lots of it.

I hope you will be grateful that one of the aims of BYU is not to prepare you to become wealthy but to build your character. President Kimball taught that BYU

has no justification for its existence unless it builds character, creates and develops faith, and makes men and women of strength and courage, fortitude, and service. . . . It is not justified on an academic basis only. [Spencer W. Kimball, "On My Honor," in *Devotional Speeches of the Year, 1978* (Provo: BYU Press, 1979), 137]

How can your experience at BYU help you develop the kind of Christlike character the aims document describes? Let me suggest a few things to consider.

Your character is formed by the things you think about, the daily decisions you make, and the actions that follow. How true are the words of this old saying:

*Sow a thought, and you reap an act;
Sow an act, and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit, and you reap a character;
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.*
[Quoted by Samuel Smiles (1812–1904)
in *Life and Labor* (1887)]

How you choose to use your time, treat your family, interact with your friends and roommates, serve your employer, do your homework, fulfill your Church callings—all of these decisions and actions will contribute to your character. The Honor Code aims to instill in us "those moral virtues encompassed

in the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Church Educational System Honor Code, available in university catalogs or from http://www.byu.edu/honorcode/honor_code.htm). If you will follow both the spirit and the letter of the Honor Code, you will develop traits of honesty, integrity, humility, and benevolence that will make you the kind of person who is sought after as a friend, an employee, and a spouse.

Your pledging to obey the Honor Code is an act of no small importance. Too many people today too easily break their promises and set aside commitments when it is no longer convenient to honor them. Such people diminish their own character and demonstrate the truth of the words spoken by Sir Thomas More in Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons*. In this play, More refuses to swear to the Act of Succession, because he cannot in good conscience approve of some of King Henry VIII's actions. When More is in danger of losing his life because of his refusal, his daughter Margaret urges him to swear the oath outwardly but in his heart to "think otherwise." More replies, "What is an oath then but words we say to God? . . . When a man takes an oath, . . . he's holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his fingers *then*—he needn't hope to find himself again" (Robert Bolt, "A Man for All Seasons," in *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert DiYanni [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990], 1497; emphasis in original). To make any commitment and then violate your promise is to let your character dribble away like water between your fingers. Honor the commitments you have made to parents, friends, roommates, teachers, employers, your bishop, and the Lord. Your character will grow more firm and steady each time you set aside your desire to do what is convenient and instead do what is right.

Let me suggest something else you might consider as you think about character development. In the October 2000 general conference of the Church, President Boyd K. Packer told

of receiving his patriarchal blessing at the age of 18 after he had entered military service. The patriarch told Brother Packer, “Guard and protect [your body]—take nothing into it that shall harm the organs thereof because it is sacred. It is the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character.” President Packer reiterated those words to all of us: “Your body really *is* the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character” (Boyd K. Packer, “Ye Are the Temple of God,” *Ensign*, November 2000, 72; emphasis in original).

I think of these words now as I walk across campus and pass students who have disabilities. Coping with blindness, deafness, motor impairments, and other challenges, these students have not allowed less-than-perfect bodies to stop them from seizing the opportunity to improve their minds. They have no doubt faced barriers and the temptation to settle for something less than a college education. But in overcoming adversity, they have built great strength of character. Their bodies—perhaps *because of* their disabilities—have become the foundations of characters marked by courage and persistence.

It is likewise with those who battle invisible challenges of chronic illness or mental and emotional conditions. They, too, can forge a sterling character in the fire of adversity. The same can be true for all. If we realize that our body is a great gift from God and our mortal parents, and if we treat that body with wisdom and respect, we can all lay the foundation for a strong character. All around us today we see two extremes where the body is concerned. At one extreme are those who seem to hate their bodies, scarring and defacing them with tattoos and multiple piercings. They use drugs and other substances that weaken and addict their bodies. To me such people seem to have tormented, unhappy characters. At the other extreme are those who are far too vain about their bodies. They are much too preoccupied with appearance. Goaded by media images of

models and movie stars, they try to shape their bodies into unrealistic ideals through sometimes life-threatening practices. They spend excessively on fashionable clothing and myriad other products to use in or on the body. Trying to meet the world’s narrow, shallow, and ever-changing standard of beauty, they may neglect to develop deeper, more lasting character traits. Such preoccupation with appearance calls to mind the words of Moroni, who, when he saw our day in vision, wrote this as he finished the record of his father, Mormon:

And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel. . . .

For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel . . . more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

Then Moroni asks:

Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not? [Mormon 8:36–37, 39]

In verse 38 Moroni suggests an answer to his own question: People do these things for “the praise of the world”; they esteem being in fashion and having peer approval more than they esteem their fellowmen and the approbation of God.

In contrast to the extremes, the gospel teaches us to make our bodies attractive by keeping them clean, neatly groomed, and modestly clothed and to discipline them by controlling our physical appetites. May I suggest that following a daily regimen that includes sufficient sleep, exercise, a healthy diet, and staying clean and well-groomed can in itself contribute to the development of character? Keeping up such discipline can

present a challenge to busy students—or anyone else. Faced with homework, tests, and other responsibilities, it is easy to excuse ourselves for lapses in a healthy routine by insisting we are just too busy. But if we persist in such an unwise course for very long, we find ourselves fatigued, sick, or depressed, unable to accomplish the physical and mental work we need to do.

Remember the remarkable promise given at the end of the Word of Wisdom:

And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. [D&C 89:18–20]

Notice that treasures of wisdom and knowledge are promised to those who heed the commandments and the laws of physical health. As President Packer said, “Your body really *is* the instrument of your mind.”

A “Spiritually Strengthening” and “Intellectually Enlarging” Education

I want to speak about the first and second aims of a BYU education—to “be spiritually strengthening” and “intellectually enlarging”—together. As far as I can tell, when these two activities are correctly understood, you can’t do one without the other. I have heard some people speak of the intellect and the spirit as if they were diametrically opposed, warning that those who engage deeply in intellectual pursuits will lose their testimonies. However, sociologists who have studied members of our Church have concluded the opposite: higher levels of education are strongly correlated with indicators of faithfulness, such as prayer and scripture study, tithing, missionary service, and temple marriage (see Stan L.

Albrecht and Tim B. Heaton, “Secularization, Higher Education, and Religiosity,” in *Review of Religious Research* 26, no. 1 [September 1984]: 43–58). This is not to say that one must have diplomas and degrees to be a stalwart member of the Church. Some of the greatest spiritual giants in my life had little formal education. But I propose that those who have attained a high degree of spirituality are also those whose minds are most alive to the wonders of creation and the noblest achievements of the human race. I submit that intellectual and spiritual pursuits not only *can* but *should* be harmonized so that the most effective learning will take place, as well as the learning that will most contribute to our spiritual safety.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer [a] man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin. [Teachings, 51]

This statement suggests that the intellect and the spirit are developed simultaneously and that the greater one grows in spiritual stature, the greater one will grow in intellectual ability as well. Brigham Young described the scope of our religion thus: “It matters not what the subject be, if it tends to improve the mind, exalt the feelings, and enlarge the capacity. The truth that is in all the arts and sciences forms a part of our religion” (*JD* 1:335 [5 December 1853]). These familiar verses from the Doctrine and Covenants sum up well the encompassing nature of what the Lord expects us to teach and learn:

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the

gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms. [D&C 88:78–79]

This scripture describes well the education we try to give students at BYU. In your religion courses you will be instructed “more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God.” I hope you will not be dismayed when your religion professors are more rigorous and demanding than the typical Sunday School teacher. The gospel is a vast topic, and it can’t be learned casually. In addition to studying the gospel, this scripture implies we should study everything from astronomy to zoology—every field of learning that belongs to this earth.

We often stop quoting the verses from section 88 at this point, but let us read the next verse, which explains *why* we should learn about so many things:

That ye may be prepared in all things when I [the Lord] shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. [D&C 88:80]

This scripture states quite simply that the education we gain in the gospel and other fields is to prepare us for the callings that the Lord will give us. I think we could do no better than to look at the current leaders of the Church to see excellent examples of people who magnify their callings precisely because they blend profound knowledge and testimonies of the gospel with broad learning and experience in various professions. For example, President

Hinckley’s experience with and understanding of the mass media have enabled him to represent the Church in a positive light to millions who are not members. I could multiply examples, but the point is clear: the Lord and His Church need people who have both spiritual understanding and excellent educational preparation. We don’t know what callings may yet come to us, but we should consider every subject we study as part of our preparation.

Thus it is important to approach our studies with an inquiring and enthusiastic attitude. Occasionally students will ask why so many courses are required in general education. Some have even seriously suggested that if they already know what they want to major in, they shouldn’t be required to take general education. Allow me to let Albert Einstein and then Brigham Young respond to that argument. When Benjamin Fine of the *New York Times* interviewed Einstein in 1952, Einstein said:

It is not enough to teach man a specialty. Through it he may become a kind of useful machine, but not a harmoniously developed personality. It is essential that the student acquire an understanding of and a lively feeling for values. He must acquire a vivid sense of the beautiful and of the morally good.

Otherwise he—with his specialized knowledge—more closely resembles a well-trained dog. . . .

Overemphasis on the competitive system and premature specialization on the ground of immediate usefulness kill the spirit on which all cultural life depends, specialized knowledge included.

[Albert Einstein, in Benjamin Fine, “Einstein Stresses Critical Thinking,” *New York Times*, 5 October 1952, News section, 37; also included as “Education for Independent Thought” in Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions*, ed. Carl Seelig, trans. and rev. Sonja Bargmann (New York: Bonanza Books, 1954), 66–67]

Now let us see what Brigham Young had to say on this topic:

Let us not narrow ourselves up; for the world, with all its variety of useful information and its rich hoard of hidden treasure, is before us; and eternity, with all its sparkling intelligence, lofty aspirations, and unspeakable glories, is before us, and ready to aid us in the scale of advancement and every useful improvement. [Brigham Young, *JD* 8:9 (4 March 1860)]

Can we imagine that Jesus, the Creator of this earth and everything in it, lacked any kind of knowledge as He prepared to fulfill the assignment His Father gave Him to “go down” and “make an earth whereon [we might] dwell” (Abraham 3:24)? I urge you to give serious effort to your general education courses. Rather than think of them as something to “get out of the way,” think of them as a way of becoming more like the Savior and of seeing His hand in all creation.

It has been said that major education prepares you to make a living, but general education prepares you to make a life. You will succeed more in your chosen profession if you are broadly educated because you will be more versatile and more able to see how details relate to each other and create the big picture. Your employer will find this a valuable trait and will be able to entrust you with more responsibilities as you gain experience in the workplace. Furthermore, your leisure time will be spent in a more ennobling way if you learn to appreciate good art, music, literature, drama, dance, and film than if you succumb to consuming most of the entertainments that popular culture offers you. So much of it is unworthy of your time, attention, and money.

I hope you will approach your studies with the attitude demonstrated 20-some years ago by a young man on this campus who was chosen to be a Rhodes scholar—a rare achievement. When he won that honor, the campus newspaper published an interview in which he said that as he approached the library to study, he felt much the same way as when he approached church on Sundays to attend

his meetings. Both study and worship were for him a time of spiritual edification. I commend that approach to you.

This young man was an example of what Elder Neal A. Maxwell has called the “disciple-scholar”:

For a disciple of Jesus Christ, academic scholarship is a form of worship. It is actually another dimension of consecration. Hence one who seeks to be a disciple-scholar will take both scholarship and discipleship seriously; and, likewise, gospel covenants. For the disciple-scholar, the first and second great commandments frame and prioritize life. How else could one worship God with all of one's heart, might, mind, and strength? (Luke 10:27.) . . .

*. . . Consecrated scholarship thus converges the life both of the mind and of the spirit! [Neal A. Maxwell, “The Disciple-Scholar,” in *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar*, ed. Henry B. Eyring (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 7, 8; emphasis in original]*

However, Elder Maxwell qualifies his urging that we worship God with our minds through scholarship. The first qualification is that “there is no democracy among truths. They are not of equal significance” (Maxwell, *On Becoming*, 3). The revealed truths of the gospel *are* more important and *do* take precedence over the truths that have been forged out of the collective efforts of human beings. It is good to know both, but if we must on occasion choose where to put our allegiance, we should choose the revealed truths of the gospel. The second qualification Elder Maxwell offers is this: “Genius without meekness is not enough to qualify for discipleship” (Maxwell, *On Becoming*, 14). The disciple-scholar blends intellectual traits with spiritual ones that often seem their opposite. Such a person tempers curiosity with obedience; questioning with submissiveness; zeal for knowledge with faith and humility; and striving to excel with brotherly kindness. Perhaps this is part of what is meant by the encouragement to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118).

I recall a time when I was in a BYU ward where one of the bishop's counselors was an undergraduate student with what I judged to be fairly ordinary intellectual talents. But he had extraordinary faith and a desire to obey. In a sacrament meeting he told of an experience he had had the previous week. With a deadline for a paper looming before him, he was hard at work writing one afternoon when a knock came at the door. A member of the ward needed his help. This young counselor knew that if he took the time to serve, he would be hard-pressed to finish his paper and do a good job on it. But he chose to serve. He came back to his paper with the deadline now only hours away. He told us he knelt and asked his Heavenly Father to let words flow into his mind. When he went back to work, his prayer was answered in just the way he had asked. Words flowed into his mind, and he was able to complete his assignment on time. He learned not only by study but also by faith.

Such dramatic experiences may not come to you. But I believe all can have experiences such as I had one Saturday afternoon in graduate school. I was wrestling with the homework in a course requiring a knowledge of statistics I lacked. As I grew more and more frustrated, I was tempted to just give up and take a zero on the assignment, knowing it would mean I would do poorly on the next test as well. But instead I prayed, and there came to me a feeling of calm and confidence that I could do this. As I went back to the homework with more faith, I found that I could figure it out, and I was able to do the assignment and pass the test.

This principle that faith contributes to learning is reinforced in Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19:

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

Notice that two ways in which we gain knowledge and intelligence are diligence and obedience. Some things we cannot learn through intellectual efforts alone. How can we know that the windows of heaven will open for us unless we tithe? How can we know the blessings of Sabbath observance unless we keep the Sabbath holy? If we are diligent and not hit-and-miss in our obedience, we will know things in a way we could never know by study alone. Let us remember the counsel of Nephi: "To be learned is good if [we] hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:29). Such hearkening will increase our knowledge and enlarge our intellectual aptitude.

Finally, let us follow the counsel given by our beloved prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, when he was a member of the Twelve nearly 40 years ago. Speaking of the Savior's invitation to "learn of me," President Hinckley said:

With all of your learning, learn of him. With all of your study, seek knowledge of the Master. That knowledge will complement in a wonderful way the secular training you receive and give a fulness to your life and character that can come in no other way. [Gordon B. Hinckley, CR, October 1964, 118; see also "With All Thy Getting Get Understanding," *Ensign*, August 1988, 5]

Preparing for "Lifelong Learning and Service"

The fourth aim of a BYU education is to prepare you for "lifelong learning and service." As I stated earlier, it is not to prepare you to earn a lot of money. Nevertheless, statistics show that, on average, those with college degrees earn significantly more than those with less education (see National Center for Education Statistics, available from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=77>). Thus most of you will become comparatively wealthy simply as a byproduct of earning a degree. Notice I said "comparatively wealthy"—and the comparison group is much of the population in the rest of the world.

On a National Public Radio program I heard recently, it was said that one billion people on this earth live on one dollar a day, and another two billion people live on two dollars a day (Lisa Simeone, "African Hunger," *Weekend All Things Considered*, NPR broadcast, 24 June 2001). Think of those figures as you listen to these statistics I gleaned recently from the newspaper: Almost \$7 billion was spent in the United States last year on cosmetics alone (Anna Quindlen, "While Obsessing Over Our Bodies, Have We Lost Our Minds?" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 April 2001, A19). Some \$13 billion was spent on chocolate (Sudarsan Raghavan and Sumana Chatterjee, "Child Slavery Taints Global Chocolate Industries," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 July 2001, A9). Another \$7 billion was spent on "videotape rentals, \$20 billion at jewelry stores, and \$24 billion at liquor stores" (Spirituality and Ethics, Shelvia Dancy, "If They Wanted, Americans Could Feed Half the World's Starving People," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 April 2001, C1). Altogether those sums total \$71 billion. Meanwhile, an organization called the Bread for the World Institute estimates that it would take only about \$1 billion a year from the U.S. over the next 15 years to subtract "512 million people from among the estimated 800 million people worldwide who suffer from hunger" (Dancy, "If They Wanted," C1). These figures challenge us all to consider whether we have the right priorities for using our means.

Those who are privileged to "enter to learn" at BYU have an obligation to then "go forth to serve." Let me read to you from the aims document:

Since a decreasing fraction of the Church membership can be admitted to study at BYU, it is ever more important that those who are admitted use their talents to build the kingdom of God on the earth. . . . Students should learn, then demonstrate, that their ultimate allegiance is to higher values, principles, and human commitments rather than to mere self-interest. By doing this, BYU graduates

can counter the destructive and often materialistic self-centeredness and worldliness that afflict modern society. A service ethic should permeate every part of BYU's activities—from the admissions process through the curriculum and extracurricular experiences to the moment of graduation. This ethic should also permeate each student's heart, leading him or her to the ultimate wellspring of charity—the love for others that Christ bestows on His followers. [Mission and Aims, 13]

The pure love of Christ will fill our hearts as we serve the less fortunate. The self-centeredness of those who ignore the poor and the needy is well-depicted in a mural painted by the great Latter-day Saint artist Minerva Teichert on a wall of the world room in the Manti Temple. Some of the murals in this room show the grand march of gentile history from the Tower of Babel to the sailing of Columbus. In one mural, against the backdrop of a great and spacious building, are a number of colorful, brightly lit figures who represent the wealthy, powerful, learned, and successful people of the world—those who have made things happen and have left their mark. In contrast to these grand figures are a number of darker figures in the foreground that one almost doesn't notice at first. They represent a variety of people in need: a homeless family; a mother and her lame son; a crippled soldier who has lost a leg in battle; a woman holding the limp body of her child in her arms; another woman clutching her head in despair; and a family of immigrants driven by oppression to seek a new life in an unseen land. (I am grateful to my colleague Doris Dant for illuminating my understanding of these murals through her article "Minerva Teichert's Manti Temple Murals," published in *BYU Studies* 38, no. 3 [1999]: 6–44.) Surveying this mural, one realizes with shock that the rich and powerful don't even glance at the poor and needy on the margins of their worldly parade. Perhaps these words from Jacob explain how this could happen: "Because they are rich they

despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their god" (2 Nephi 9:30).

We know that riches are not in themselves bad; rather, it is the way we use riches that leads either to approbation or condemnation. We learn also from Jacob that if we seek first for the kingdom of God and obtain a hope in Christ, we "shall obtain riches, if [we] seek them." But he adds a powerful caution: We should seek them "for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted" (Jacob 2:18–19). As with riches, fame is not necessarily bad—if it comes from doing something good. Certainly we are grateful to know the story of Columbus, whose voyage prepared the way for a new nation where freedom would flourish and the gospel could be restored. A deed like his is worthy of mention in the world's history. But remember that one can also do important service that likely won't be recorded by historians. These words from the closing lines of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* express an important truth:

The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs. [George Eliot, Middlemarch (Ware, Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994), 781]

Whether you serve in relative obscurity as a parent or a Primary teacher, or whether you serve in the limelight as a government official or a prominent Church leader, your service is significant to its beneficiaries, and it is known to the Lord.

I know that you students have already begun to give significant service, which has been considered in the decision to admit you to the university. Let me suggest some ways that you can continue to serve. One is to accept

callings and assignments in your ward and stake. Another is to take a service-learning course. The Jacobsen Center for Service and Learning on this campus helps teachers make service an integral part of the curriculum in many courses, and it keeps track of service opportunities for which students may volunteer outside of class. The David M. Kennedy Center has several international study programs that make service in a foreign land a meaningful part of the time students spend abroad. But you don't need to travel abroad or even to turn to an organized center to find opportunities to serve. They are all around you in your family, your ward, your apartment or residence hall, and in the community.

One of the joys of my current assignment is to review portfolios of students who are applying to graduate with University Honors. Among other things, these portfolios contain a description of a memorable service activity that each student has engaged in. As I have read these descriptions, I have sometimes been humbled to tears by the quality and quantity of the service rendered. Keep in mind that students who want to graduate with honors must also keep a high GPA as well as do original research and write a thesis while taking a regular load of courses, so finding time for significant service requires great discipline and sacrifice on their part. Yet they do it willingly, and they write of tutoring children with developmental disabilities or helping those with physical handicaps or of giving health care or helping to build schools or sanitation facilities in less-developed nations. Often the honors thesis itself represents research that has blessed or will bless the lives of others. You don't have to be an honors student to serve others or to do research that may benefit others; nevertheless, the Honors Program is open to all, and many of you freshmen may want to investigate joining. Regardless, you will find your learning and service here to be just as perfunctory or just as enriching as you decide to make them.

Conclusion

The four aims together “aspire to promote an education that helps students integrate all parts of their university experience into a fundamentally sacred way of life” (*Mission of BYU*, 14). No other university I know of (except our sister campuses in Hawaii and Idaho) aspires to such a lofty goal. Because of the seriousness of what we are about, some of you may be thinking that life at BYU will be a cross between boot camp and a never-ending church meeting. You may be asking yourselves, “Isn’t there going to be any fun here?” The answer, of course, is yes. You will find plenty of fun—in adventures with roommates and friends; activities in your ward and residence halls; at sporting events, concerts, and dances; and, occasionally, even in the classroom. I don’t need to wish for you that you will have fun. It will happen.

But I do wish for you that when you look back years from now, you will see that your college years were much more than fun. I wish for you the peace of mind that comes from knowing you honored commitments, treated friends and associates in a Christlike way, and increased in self-discipline and integrity. I hope you will feel a humble gratitude from knowing that you dedicated—even consecrated—yourself to improving your intellectual talents and increasing your spirituality. I pray that because you have tasted the joy that comes from service, you will seek to serve continually throughout

your life. Such a sweet self-assessment can be yours years hence if you do not content yourself now with lounging comfortably at a base camp in the foothills when, with some exertion, you could be standing on the summit of a great mountain.

President Kimball prophesied that Brigham Young University will one day be an “educational Everest” (Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” in *Speeches of the Year, 1975* [Provo: BYU, 1976], 244). President Bateman last fall expressed his belief that BYU will play an important role in the establishment of Zion (see Merrill J. Bateman, “Learning in the Light of Truth,” BYU Annual University Conference, 21 August 2000, http://speeches.byu.edu/auc/00AUC_Bateman.pdf). I believe that will happen in large part because the students who come here will rise to the challenge of the four aims and dedicate themselves to becoming a Zion people.

I express my confidence in you. You are a chosen generation, and the Lord loves you and will bless you in all your righteous endeavors. I leave you my testimony that His church and kingdom have been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that His chosen servant, Gordon B. Hinckley, leads His work on the earth today. I am grateful for that testimony, and I bear it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.