

# *The Lord Desires Your Success*

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**G**ood morning. It is an honor to stand before you this day, and it is an honor to teach at this great university. I have long pondered the message I would share today, and I have looked forward to this day with apprehension—praying that I will say those things that will be of most benefit to you. This opportunity to speak to you has been overwhelming and humbling, to say the least, and I have taken courage from the words of King David to his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:20:

*Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.*

## **Knowledge and Intelligence**

I love coming to campus each fall. I can feel of your knowledge and intelligence—I find it invigorating. In Doctrine and Covenants 93:30 we read, “All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.” In Doctrine and Covenants 93:36 the Lord clarifies the meaning of intelligence: “The glory of God is intelligence, or,

in other words, light and truth.” We have been instructed in Doctrine and Covenants 88:118, “Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” What does this mean for you and me? In my mind this translates to my being diligent in pursuing knowledge and being obedient in applying my learning to righteous purposes as I exercise faith.

President Brigham Young taught:

*We . . . keep learning, and we do not expect to cease learning while we live on earth; and when we pass through the veil, we expect still to continue to learn and increase our fund of information. That may appear a strange idea to some; but it is for the plain and simple reason that we are not capacitated to receive all knowledge at once. We must therefore receive a little here and a little there.<sup>1</sup>*

In other words, the work of knowledge and, subsequently, intelligence is developmental and ongoing throughout our lives. We

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begin our learning as an infant, and personal development is ongoing.

One of my favorite growth and development theories comes from a well-known psychologist, Erik Erikson. Dr. Erikson maintains that an individual's development occurs throughout the span of life. He outlined a theory known as the eight stages of psychosocial development. This is a theory that I have found enlightening, especially considering our understanding that Heavenly Father's plan for us is developmental. I have implemented aspects of this theory into my daily interactions, not only as a professional but also as a wife, mother, friend, daughter, and neighbor.

According to Erikson, during the course of our lifetime, each one of us moves through specific stages of development that are framed with opposing core conflicts. He proposed that each conflict must be successfully mastered before progressing to the next stage. Speaking very simplistically, as we successfully resolve each stage of development conflict, we are prepared to move forward to the next phase. Each phase of development builds upon the prior stage. The stages of development are as follows:

Trust vs. Mistrust (birth to 1 year)  
Autonomy vs. Sense of Shame/Doubt (1–3 years)  
Initiative vs. Guilt (3–6 years)  
Industry vs. Inferiority (6–11 years)  
Identity vs. Role Confusion (puberty)  
Intimacy vs. Isolation (young adult)  
Generativity vs. Self-Absorption and Stagnation (middle age)  
Ego Integrity vs. Despair (old age)<sup>2</sup>

Resolving the conflict of each stage of development is progressive, although the conflict is not always mastered during the specific stage suggested and may be returned to later in life for resolution.

As I look back at my own personal growth and development and acquisition of knowledge

and intelligence, I can see light, truth, and faith guiding my progression through each stage. I would like to share with you a few educational insights I have gained as I have moved through some of the stages of development and learned, as suggested by Elder Bruce C. Hafen, "line upon line, step by step, grace for grace."<sup>3</sup>

### **Engage Your Mind**

The stage of Industry vs. Inferiority is a time of work and productivity. We begin school and we start to think more independently. When I was a young girl in this stage, my father—an engineer—would encourage me to think logically and to reason. "Use your brain," he would say as he encouraged me to seek knowledge and additional understanding in all areas of my life. He taught me to reason and to think critically. He taught me to seek for light and truth in both the academic and spiritual realms. For many years I did not truly understand the context of his comment, but over time I grew to recognize the beauty of knowledge and intelligence, the empowerment of education, and the importance of spiritual faith coupled with secular learning.

### **Be a Better Person**

The conflict of Identity vs. Role Confusion during our teenage years is difficult for many. During this time we incorporate our personal beliefs with those of society and begin to make decisions about the future. When I was a teen, I would occasionally defy my parents' suggestions regarding my performance in life. I remember very distinctly being frustrated with my mother one day as she proposed recommendations for my future. As my mother was advising me, I angrily turned and began to walk away—and then I heard her quietly comment, "I only want you to be a better person than I am." My heart immediately softened, and I wondered how anyone could possibly be better than my own dear mother. I have since apologized for my behavior, but her

comment (or rather her challenge to me to be a better person) has stayed with me throughout my life. As a teen, and even now, that challenge has motivated me to be a better person—it taught me the importance of applying my learning.

As a result of my parents' teachings during the first stages of development, I set goals for my life—goals for my future family, goals regarding my education, and goals for my spiritual growth. I feel that when goals are combined with faith and reason, they empower us throughout all life stages as we seek to resolve many of these developmental conflicts. Goals enable us to engage our minds in righteous endeavors and motivate us to be better people. Even President Gordon B. Hinckley, at age ninety-two, set goals to be a better person:

*I, for one, have made a stronger resolution within myself to be a better person than I have been in the past. I hope that I will be a little kinder to any I meet who may be in distress. I hope that I will be a little more helpful to those who are in need. I hope that I will be a little more worthy of your confidence. I hope that I will be a better husband, a better father and grandfather. I hope that I will be a better neighbor and friend. I hope that I will be a better Latter-day Saint, with an increased understanding of the wonderful aspects of this glorious gospel.<sup>4</sup>*

### **Follow Righteous Goals**

After graduating from high school (during the stage of Intimacy vs. Isolation), I registered at a university and joined the gymnastics team. I created an impressive routine on the uneven parallel bars and achieved some success in competition. Just prior to the regional meet I decided to change the final maneuver of my routine. As the first competitor from our team, I felt confident that the change I had made would result in a winning routine, and I anticipated an extremely positive outcome.

My performance, however, was anything but satisfactory, as I fell from the bars with

every maneuver I attempted. After completing the routine, I walked from the apparatus in absolute humiliation and disgust. I could not look my teammates nor my coach in the eye. As I tearfully made my way past my coach, his only comment was, "I never should have let you change the ending of your routine."

I have often pondered his comment and the devastating impact the change in my final maneuver had upon my performance and that of my peers. In spite of hard work and dedicated preparation, the other members of the team felt my discouragement and loss of vision. They also performed substandard routines.

I learned a few things from this experience. In my mind, the maneuvers of my routine represent the implementation of my goals, the final maneuver embodies the personal vision of where I am going in life, and the outcome is dependent upon my performance. It reminds me of the importance of setting righteous goals in life and not giving up—even during trials. It reminds me of the value of having a sound vision of where we are going and the importance of recognizing the influence we have upon each other.

I think about this experience often when reviewing my goals for life. My ponderings about my experience on the gymnastics team solidified my determination to attain goals that will lead me to a righteous end in my life's journey. Setting righteous goals early in life has provided positive direction for my spiritual and academic learning. In a timeless address, Elder M. Russell Ballard said:

*I believe you can train yourself to become a positive thinker, but you must cultivate a desire to develop the skill of setting personal worthy and realistic goals. I am so thoroughly convinced that if we don't set goals in our life and learn how to master the technique of living to reach our goals, we can reach a ripe old age and look back on our life only to see that we reached but a small part of our full*

*potential. When you learn to master the principle of setting a goal, you will then be able to make a great difference in the results you attain in this life.*

He then instructed us:

*If your goals are righteous, of God-given perspective, eternal in their nature, then go for them. Pray for the inner strength to have the discipline to do those things that will guarantee through your activity and your life that you will reach your goals. Then, I think, perhaps as important as anything, we have to have faith. We have to have faith in God. We have to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And oh, how desperately we have to have faith in ourselves.<sup>5</sup>*

How important it is to trust in yourself—to have faith that you can complete your goals. What are your goals in life? You are here at this extraordinary university; it is evident that you have set educational goals. Hopefully you have also set spiritual goals as well as goals for family and service as you seek light and truth and apply the knowledge and intelligence you are attaining.

### **Trust in the Lord**

I have found that my spiritual goals and my educational goals complement each other and have provided strength to overcome many of the vicissitudes of life. I have learned to trust in the Lord as I pursue my goals. My educational journey and my journey in life have not been without challenges. In fact, there are those who wonder why I have continued to pursue my education when considering the tests of life. Some of my greatest challenges were encountered while I was a single mother. For twenty-five years I raised my children alone. This “adventure,” however, did not deter me from my goals of raising a righteous family, seeking for spiritual learning, and continuing my education.

I remember feeling very old when I returned to school, then in the stage of

Generativity vs. Stagnation. I had been a registered nurse for fourteen years, and my youngest child was sixteen years old. But the prompting to return to school was so strong that I knew I should continue. Even so, I completed a few courses online before I was brave enough to enter the traditional classroom.

The very first day of class I knew that I would never survive this journey without a friend. So when I returned home that night and knelt in prayer, I prayed for a good friend. The next week, when I returned to class, there was another “more mature” woman sitting in the back. I knew when I met her that my prayer had been answered. Jane and I became steadfast friends. To this day we continue to support each other through various life challenges.

Our friendship has strengthened my faith that our Heavenly Father is aware of our goals and is involved in the details of our lives. It has also made me aware of the importance of having a good friend as you pursue your goals in life. Because of my friendship with Jane, I began to pray each day that my children—and now also my grandchildren—would each find a good friend and then be a good friend. When I came to teach at BYU, I extended my prayer to each of you. Sometimes I even say a quiet prayer as I walk across campus and notice a student who looks like they could use a good friend. Hopefully my prayers have been answered in your behalf. I hope that you will join me in my prayer that you will each find a good friend and be a good friend.

### **Go Forward with Faith**

One evening following a long day’s work at the hospital, I entered the BYU Salt Lake Center to attend a graduate-level course. On this particular evening I was very tired, and I chose to take the elevator to class rather than carry my very large and heavy backpack of books up the stairs. As I stood waiting for the elevator I commiserated: I was tired, and I wondered if this goal of advanced education

was worth it. I knew that it would open new doors in employment but that it would not change my financial income. I thought, “What on earth were you thinking when you returned to school?” As I considered my motives, I glanced to the side and noticed the words “Enter to learn; go forth to serve,” and I knew immediately that my education would help me obtain new light and truth and make available opportunities of faithful service that I had not previously contemplated.

I love the motto of Brigham Young University. It provided guidance as I completed my education, and it continues to guide my service today. Elder David H. Bednar offered insight regarding our motto:

*On the landmark sign located at the entrance to Brigham Young University, the following motto is found: “Enter to learn; go forth to serve.” This expression certainly does not imply that everything necessary for a lifetime of meaningful service can or will be obtained during a few short years of higher education. Rather, the spirit of this statement is that students come to receive foundational instruction about learning how to learn and learning to love learning. Furthermore, students’ desires and capacities to serve are not “put on hold” during their university years of intellectual exploration and development.*

*May I respectfully suggest an addition to this well-known motto that is too long to put on the sign but important for us to remember regardless of which university or college we attend: “Enter to learn to love learning and serving; go forth to continue learning and serving.”<sup>6</sup>*

I am grateful for the opportunities that I have had to advance my education. It is my continual prayer that I will recognize opportunities of service that will enable me to share my education and my testimony of the gospel.

In a lecture given to students in the BYU Honors Program, James S. Jardine suggested that “we have a prescribed duty to develop the

gifts and talents, including intellectual gifts, bestowed on us by God.”<sup>7</sup> He then said that in order to consecrate our intellectual gifts, we must first develop them, and that “our consecrated learning enables us more completely to comfort those who stand in need of comfort—whether they are learned or uneducated, successful or downtrodden, gracious or difficult.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Consecrate Learning**

Shortly after completing my master’s degree I contemplated returning once again to further my education with a doctorate degree. I began preparing applications to doctoral programs and fasted and prayed that I would know which course would be best for me to take. The answer to my prayers came in the form of the still, small voice whispering that a doctoral degree was not needed for the next service I would be asked to provide. I withheld my doctoral applications with the exception of one that was already submitted. The Spirit then came even stronger—indicating that a doctoral degree would not be needed for the service I would provide next. The prompting came so strongly that I began to pray that I would not be accepted. I was not accepted into the graduate program, although my friend Jane was. It was a bittersweet experience, and yet we both went forward in faith.

A few short months later I received the calling to serve as one of the Relief Society presidents at the Utah State Prison. It was a deeply spiritual experience and a unique opportunity that required me to serve with all of my “heart, might, mind and strength” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2). Serving in this position continually reminded me of our divine heritage and the love that our Heavenly Father has for us. On the first Sunday that I attended meetings at the prison, the Spirit bore witness to me that I had been prepared to serve in this calling. I had been prepared spiritually, educationally, and by unique life experiences.

One of my responsibilities as the Relief Society president was to evaluate the needs of the women attending our meetings. I would meet with each woman individually and discuss her life goals and physical needs as she worked toward her release. Then, just prior to her release, I would prepare orders for clothing and personal items. I generally would deliver the needed items to a halfway house late in the afternoon; however, one morning I delivered the items early—prior to coming to campus for class. On my way to campus my thoughts focused on the challenges and struggles these women faced, the strength each of us needs to overcome adversity, and the empowerment of education.

My thoughts were heavy that day as I pondered how to best meet the needs of the women I was serving. As I arrived on campus and parked, I also began to contemplate the needs of the students in my class. Just as I stepped across the classroom threshold, the still, small voice whispered that there were students in my class that day who had also experienced unhappy struggles in life and were seeking to improve themselves through education. And I paused—for the Spirit bore witness that I teach among spiritual giants and dearly beloved children of our Heavenly Father. I was reminded once again of the spiritual gifts offered to each of God’s children, the power of the Atonement, the importance of setting wise goals in all areas of our lives, and the empowerment of education.

### **The Lord Desires Your Success**

My educational journey did not end with my calling as a Relief Society president. Rather, it has continued throughout my life. President Henry B. Eyring has instructed us:

*No service that matters can be given over a lifetime by those who stop learning. A great teacher is always studying. A nurse never stops facing the challenge of dealing with something new, be*

*it equipment or procedure. And the workplace in every industry is changing so rapidly that what we know today will not be enough for tomorrow.<sup>9</sup>*

My real-life education continues to this day; I am constantly studying for my professional service and for my family, community, and Church service. In May of this year I graduated one more time—this time with my doctor of nursing practice degree. It represented the fulfillment of one more goal. The Lord had not forgotten. I had the honor of graduating with my sister, who had taken the past nine years to complete her bachelor’s degree in business. It was a great honor for both of us as we completed our educational goals. We are blessed to have families who have supported us and rejoiced in our educational achievements. We are grateful for a Heavenly Father who recognized our goals and blessed us with the fortitude to continue our education.

I have not yet reached the final stage of development. However, for nearly twelve years I cared for a great-aunt as she progressed through the stage of Ego Integrity vs. Despair. Some days were more difficult than others for Aunt Beth, especially as she neared the end of her life. One evening after a particularly trying day, Beth and I talked about some of our life journeys and contemplated together the plan of happiness that the Lord has provided for us. At the end of our conversation, Beth took my hand and said, “Life is good, Peggy. Life is good.” She looked at the past with peace and satisfaction—mastery of the conflict.

Throughout my life I have received priesthood blessings to help me as I worked toward my goals of education and service. While serving in my calling at the prison I received a blessing that opened my eyes of understanding about our relationship with our Heavenly Father, the respect He has for our righteous goals, and the deep love He has for each one of us. I don’t usually share personal blessings, but I feel that this blessing was meant to be shared.

On the day that I received this blessing, the stake presidency of the sponsoring stake at the prison was visiting our meetings. All of the women who wanted blessings had received them. I was then asked by a member of the stake presidency if I would like a priesthood blessing. At the beginning of the blessing the counselor giving the blessing thanked me for my service. Then he paused and said the following: “The Lord desires your success. He desires your success in all aspects of your life—in your profession, in your education, in your family, in your relationships. The Lord desires your success.”

It empowers me when I realize that the Lord desires my success. It motivates me to engage my mind in education and righteous activities, to be a better person, to set righteous goals, to be a good friend, to consecrate my learning, and to go forward with faith. My friends, I bear my testimony that I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that They know and love each one of us. I bear my testimony that They know your goals and They desire your success—in your education, in your profession, in your service, in your families, and in your relationships. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes

1. JD 6:286; quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 87.
2. See Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1963), 247–73; see also Patricia A. Potter and Anne Griffin Perry, *Fundamentals of Nursing*, 7th ed. (St. Louis, Missouri: Mosby Elsevier, 2009), 139–40.
3. Bruce C. Hafen, “The Atonement: All for All,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 97.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Each a Better Person,” *Ensign*, November 2002, 99.
5. M. Russell Ballard, “Go for It!” *New Era*, March 2004, 4, 7.
6. David A. Bednar, “Learning to Love Learning,” *Ensign*, February 2010, 28.
7. James S. Jardine, “Consecration and Learning,” in Henry B. Eyring, ed., *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar: Lectures Presented at the Brigham Young University Honors Program Discipline and Discipleship Lecture Series* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 75.
8. Jardine, “Consecration,” 78–79.
9. Henry B. Eyring, “Education for Real Life,” *Ensign*, October 2002, 19.