

“I Can Sleep When the Wind Blows”

SHAYNE M. BOWEN

My dear brothers and sisters, it is indeed an honor to be able to meet with you in this beautiful facility on this gorgeous campus. I feel like Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind* when she said that she drew her strength from Tara. I feel strengthened and revitalized each time I drive onto this campus.

My wife and I have so many wonderful memories of Provo, Utah, and Brigham Young University. Sister Bowen and I both graduated from this marvelous institution—she in elementary education with a minor in music and I in English with a minor in Spanish.

I proposed to Sister Bowen on the stairs of the lower campus during fall semester of 1976, near the Karl G. Maeser Building. I know the very spot. Our first child, Leisle, was born in the Provo hospital in 1977. Sister Bowen picked me up in front of the administration building as we rushed to the hospital. I was so nervous and excited! What a responsibility! I was going to be a daddy. We now have seven children and twenty-three grandchildren. We have been married forty-two years, yet, somehow, I still feel I am twenty-three. To quote Jacob, “The time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream” (Jacob 7:26).

We have found and continue to find peace, joy, and happiness through our family. I witness that the plan of happiness presented to us by our

Father in Heaven has not changed, that the sealing of a man to a woman in the house of the Lord is essential for us to obtain the highest degree of the celestial kingdom and ultimately become like our Father in Heaven, and that the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth has never been revoked. True happiness is found as we strive to become an eternal family.

Some members of the Church remain single through no fault of their own, even though they want to marry. . . . [Those who] remain worthy . . . will someday, in this life or the next, be given all the blessings of an eternal family relationship. The Lord has made this promise repeatedly through His latter-day prophets.¹

Character, Honor, and Integrity

As I begin, let me share with you one of my favorite stories.

Many years ago the old country fair in parts of England was, besides being the place of exhibition for farm products, [the place] where employer and employee met. . . .

Farmer Smith wanted a boy to work on his farm. He was doing some interviewing of candidates. A

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thoughtful looking lad of about sixteen attracted him. The boy was confronted with a rather abrupt question from the gruff old agriculturist. "What can you do?" The boy swung back at him in the same style, "I can sleep when the wind blows."

. . . Notwithstanding he didn't particularly like the answer to a civil question he got from the teenager, there was something about the gray eyes of that fellow that got under his skin.

He approached the lad again with the same question, "What did you say you could do?" Again the same answer bounced back at him, "I can sleep when the wind blows."

Mr. Smith was still disgusted with such an answer and went to other parts of the fair to look into the faces of other youngsters who might want a job on a farm, but there was something about that answer he got that stuck to him like glue. First thing he knew his feet were carrying him back to meet the steady gaze of those deliberate eyes of the boy with such strange language.

"What did you say you could do?" for the third time he thundered at the farm help. For the third time, too, the farmer got the same answer. . . . "I can sleep when the wind blows."

"Get into the wagon—we'll try you out." . . .

One night Farmer Smith was waked about 2:00 a.m. with what might be a cyclone. It seemed that gusts from the north in only a few minutes developed with intensity to threaten the roof over his head. The trees cracked and noises outside turned the nervous system of our friend upside down. The speed he used to jump into his trousers was only outdone by the lightning as it broke up the darkness outside. With shoes half-laced he rushed out into the farmyard to see if anything on the premises was still intact, but he would need the services on a wicked night like this of that new boy. He called up the stairs of the attic where the latter slept, but the response was the healthy lung heaving of a healthy lad. He went half the way up the stairs and thundered again, but only a snore echoed back. In excitement he went to the boy's bed and did everything but tear the bed clothes from the youth, but the lad slept on.

With a mixture of desperation and disgust he faced the gale, and out into the farmyard he plunged. He first approached the cow barn. Lo and behold, the milk producers were peacefully chewing their cud, and the

inside of their abode was as snug as a mouse under a haystack. It didn't take him long to discover how the boy had chinked up the cracks of the cow abode and reestablished the locks and hinges. In the pigpen he found the same tranquility, notwithstanding the forces at work that night.

He turned to the haystack. As he felt about in the darkness, it didn't take him very long to determine again the preparation of the lad with the gray, steady eyes. Every few feet on that feed stack wires had been thrown and weighted on each side. With this construction the alfalfa was peacefully under control and laughing at the elements.

Our farmer friend was stunned with what revelations he had in a few minutes of that cyclone night. He dropped his head. His mental maneuvers shot like lightning to the boy snoring in the attic. Again, the peculiar answer of a few weeks ago slapped him in the face: "I can sleep when the wind blows."²

This young man displays what to me personifies character, honor, and integrity. He summarized what he was in seven simple words: "I can sleep when the wind blows." Without being flashy, he knew exactly who he was, and when the test came, he didn't need to question what he would do. He had already made the decision in his life. Regardless of the circumstances, he would be prepared. His word was his bond.

I want to talk to you today about what it means to be able to sleep when the wind blows. I want to talk to you about being the best *you* and about living your lives with character, honor, and integrity.

The very fact that you are attending this university is evidence to me that you are extremely intelligent. The requirements to attend Brigham Young University are set at a high bar; however, be very careful: intelligence without character, honor, and integrity can be very dangerous. In all of your dealings with others, decide today to do the right thing for the right reason. If you wait until the moment of necessity to make that life-changing decision, you will often make the wrong choice. Prepare in times of peace and you will be prepared for the heat of the battle. In those intense moments you will act instinctively—because that is who you are.

The Importance of Our Choices

Harry Potter's mentor Albus Dumbledore said: "It is not our abilities that show what we truly are. It is our choices."³

Another saying teaches, "Respect and goodwill are earned by many fine performances and lost by one bad act."

Let me give you a couple of simple examples of choices that display character, honor, and integrity.

This university is not your normal university. Each student who attends here has signed the honor code. That means each one has exercised his or her agency and committed to uphold the standards of that honor code. There are literally thousands of worthy, prepared, and bright young people worldwide who would love more than anything in this world to be sitting in the chairs you are sitting in today.

I remember my freshman year here at BYU. I thought that everyone thought the same way I did. I knew exactly what I was getting into when I chose to come here to school. I was looking for an atmosphere of learning—both secular as well as religious—that would help me to be a better person and help in my mission preparations and my life preparations.

I was not disappointed. I found all of that. But what did surprise me were students who seemed not to value the honor code they had signed. I found myself wondering why anyone would willfully sign an honor code just to break it. If they never had intentions to honor it in the first place, why would they choose this place? Why would they so willingly sacrifice their character, honor, and integrity? If they were looking for a party school, they certainly should not have chosen Brigham Young University. Even in my time it was considered one of the soberest schools in the world.

I began to feel that this obvious disconnect of saying one thing and doing another was disappointing. I realized it showed a glaring lack of character, honor, and integrity. It made me think of the truths found in Ecclesiastes 5:4–5:

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it. . . .

Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

Keeping the honor code is a perfect example of character, honor, and integrity. You committed, and now you must keep your word even when no one is looking. You must do so because you said you would.

Another unique feature of this university is that your tuition is heavily subsidized by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those funds come from faithful members who pay their tithes and offerings of their own free will and choice, with the expectation that the funds will be used for righteous purposes by people who are honorable and have character and integrity. In this case, that would be you.

We are talking about funds that have been given by a single mother of six children in Bolivia or the Philippines or anywhere else in the world. In your comportment, in your study habits, in your faithfulness to God, do you have any obligation to your benefactors, to your contributors? I think so. I call that obligation developing character, honor, and integrity.

These three attributes require self-discipline. I really like a quote from Thomas H. Huxley, who observed:

Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and however early a man's training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.⁴

This says to me that making the right decisions is not always convenient, easy, or natural. Developing the three Christlike attributes we are discussing requires hard work, discipline, and determination. All are processes that the natural man dislikes and rebels against. Also, Thomas Huxley's words seem to me to hint at the same kind of character testing that God described when the plan of happiness was introduced. He explained, "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things

whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25).

Staying True to Yourself

Many times, as we go through life, we lose track of who we are and the magnificent potential we have within ourselves. We spend our lives looking for happiness just around the next corner, buying things we can’t afford, and trying to impress people we will never see again. Sometimes we allow pride to be our guide, when serving others should be our daily focus.

Often we try to shape our lives and our bodies to meet the expectations of others and to impress the world, which is impossible to impress because it is ever changing. Sometimes in this madness we forget what really matters.

I have a favorite story by Jules Feiffer that makes this point well.

Ever since I was a little kid I didn’t want to be me. I wanted to be Billie Widdleton. And Billie Widdleton didn’t even like me.

I walked like he walked. I talked like he talked. I signed up for the high school he signed up for— Which was when Billie Widdleton changed. He began to hang around Herby Vandeman. He walked like Herby Vandeman. He talked like Herby Vandeman.

He mixed me up! I began to walk and talk like Billie Widdleton walking and talking like Herby Vandeman.

And then it dawned on me that Herby Vandeman walked and talked like Joey Haverlin, and Joey Haverlin walked and talked like Corky Sabinson.

So here I am walking and talking like Billie Widdleton’s imitation of Herby Vandeman’s version of Joey Haverlin trying to walk and talk like Corky Sabinson.

And who do you think Corky Sabinson is always walking and talking like? Of all people—dopey Kenny Wellington—

That little pest who walks and talks like me.⁵

My dear brothers and sisters, you are sons and daughters of God. You have within you the ability to become like Him and receive all that your Father has. Your Father in Heaven knows you. He

loves you. He created you. He wants to help you. He wants you to reach your full potential, whatever that may be. He wants you to be your best *you*, and He will help you find and become that person.

I can promise you that all who develop in this earthly existence character, honor, and integrity and receive and keep all of the covenants God has made available to His children will inherit eternal life. This is our end goal. It is also the great test of this life.

Speaking of character, I think of the words of Rudyard Kipling in his wonderful poem entitled “If—,” written to his son:

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or being hated, don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build ’em up with worn-out tools:*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on!”*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;*

*If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!*⁶

This poem personifies character for me.

Speaking of honor, Karl G. Maeser once wrote:

*I have been asked what I mean by word of honor. I will tell you. Place me behind prison walls—walls of stone ever so high, ever so thick, reaching ever so far into the ground—there is a possibility that in some way or another I may be able to escape, but stand me on that floor and draw a chalk line around me and have me give my word of honor never to cross it. Can I get out of that circle? No, never! I'd die first!*⁷

I believe that integrity is a product of such character and honor. The prophet Job said, “Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me” (Job 27:5).

I believe we show our character, honor, and integrity by the way we treat each other. We never take advantage of the weaknesses of another person. We show integrity when we do what we say and when we act with kindness, treating others as the Savior would. The Savior said, “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Ghost will help you. You know what is right and wrong. Since I was eight years old, there has never been a time when I didn't know right from wrong. I haven't always had the moral courage to choose the right, but it wasn't because I didn't know.

The vast majority of you, like me, have been blessed by baptism and confirmation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the right to receive the Holy Ghost if you desire. I hope that you realize that receiving the Holy Ghost is not an event but a lifelong process. You have the agency to invite Him into your life every day—or not. Remember that your actions, thoughts, and words will determine if He will be invited to teach you the truth of all things. He

is the perfect gentleman; He comes only when invited. So listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost. He will guide you and direct you. He is the testifier of the Father and the Son.

Consider the words of Samuel the Lamanite:

And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you. [Helaman 14:30–31]

Moving Forward to Conquer the World

I have created a short list of reminders I have gleaned from others throughout my life that will help you keep your character, honor, and integrity as you move forward out of this university to conquer the world.

Here are Elder Bowen's things to remember as you conquer the world:

- Moses gave us the Ten Commandments, not the Ten Suggestions.
- Habits, good or bad, are first like cobwebs, then like chains.
- There is no right way to do a wrong thing.
- Don't be a legend in your own mind.
- Don't be a self-made man who worships his creator.
- Be kind; everyone is fighting a hard battle.
- Everyone is special, but no one is special.
- Even Moses said after seeing the creations of God, “Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed” (Moses 1:10).
- “It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.”⁸
- If you always tell the truth, you don't have to remember what you said.
- Honesty is the only policy.

- Don't pray on your knees on Sunday and prey on your neighbor the rest of the week.
- "Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."⁹

My brothers and sisters, ye are free to act for yourselves.

I close with William Ernest Henley's "Invictus"—a poem that underscores the importance of personal responsibility and accountability.

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.¹⁰*

My dear brothers and sisters, I pray that your determined course in life will always be guided by your Father in Heaven through His Son, Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I pray that you will always develop—and retain at any cost—the attributes and ideals we have discussed today.

And now, returning to our unassuming farm boy, I pray that whatever storms come into your life—and I promise they will come—you can be a person of character, honor, and integrity. And most of all, I pray that you can sleep when the wind blows.

I witness that God lives; that His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer; and that the

Holy Ghost testifies of the Father and the Son, and He will teach you the truth of all things if you so desire and so live.

The Father's plan of happiness has been restored in these the latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon is tangible proof of that restoration.

Jesus Christ leads His Church today through His living prophets. I have come to know these things for myself and testify that you can know them too. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 99.

2. Marvin O. Ashton, *To Whom It May Concern* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), 102–4; see Thomas Whittaker, "How to Sleep on a Windy Night," chapter 21 in *Brighter England and the Way to It* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1891), 259–61.

3. Albus Dumbledore, IMDb's pages for quotes for *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002), imdb.com/title/tt0295297/quotes.

4. Thomas H. Huxley, "Technical Education" (1877).

5. Jules Feiffer, "Ever Since I Was a Little Kid," in *Feiffer's People: Sketches and Observations* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1969), 38.

6. Rudyard Kipling, "If—" (1895).

7. Karl G. Maeser, in Alma P. Burton, *Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953), 71.

8. Roy O. Disney, who said this many times with various wording.

9. Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Great Philosophers of the Western World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 61. Durant was summing up Aristotle's comment: "It is not one swallow or one fine day that makes a spring, so it is not one day or a short time that makes a man blessed and happy" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, book I, chapter 7).

10. William Ernest Henley, *Echoes* (1888), no. 4, "In Memoriam R. T. Hamilton Bruce" ("Invictus").