

# *What Manner of Men and Women Ought Ye to Be?*

H. DAVID BURTON

Sister Burton and I, along with some of our family, including three Brigham Young University students and a Utah State University student, and a pretty friend, Crystal Ming, who is attending at the institute of religion at the University of Washington, are delighted to be with you this Sabbath evening. Barbara and I dearly love to associate with the rising generation. We love your exuberance. We love your faithfulness. We love you for what you have accomplished in your young lives and for what you will yet accomplish as you serve with great distinction our Father in Heaven and one another. We love you for the virtue and goodness that shows in your faces and accompanies your very presence here this evening.

Two weeks ago Sister Burton and I participated in a devotional for temple workers at the Nauvoo Temple. Most of those marvelous people are several generations older than most of you. We felt the presence of a wonderful spirit on that occasion in that glorious house. We feel that same sweet spirit as we visit with you tonight. Nevertheless, you are a bit intimidating as you gather in large numbers, both in this remarkable building on this beautiful campus and in many other places throughout the world via satellite and technology.

I will never forget my first speaking experience at a general conference. The invitation I received to speak indicated that I was to speak for 14 minutes in the Sunday morning session and to follow President Howard W. Hunter. Needless to say, the circumstances were very intimidating for me on that occasion as well. A week or so before the general conference, I met Elder Russell M. Nelson in the hall, and he inquired about how my talk was progressing. I confided to Elder Nelson that I was struggling with my preparation, and then it occurred to me that the only reason he knew I was speaking was because his invitation must have indicated that he was to follow me. So, armed with that very vital little piece of information, I boldly asked Elder Nelson why someone as green and scared as I would be placed between President Hunter and himself. He thought for a moment, and then, with that ever-present twinkle he always has in his eye, he said, "Bishop, the only reason I can think of is that you have been placed there by inspiration to make us look good." The intimidation level rose to an all-time high after that little exchange.

---

*H. David Burton was the Presiding Bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given on 2 November 2008.*

**“Will You Ever Make Something of Yourself?”**

Nearly a half century ago, just prior to my missionary experience in Australia, I had the great blessing to work for about four years in a golf shop for an extraordinary Scottish golf professional. His name was Alex McCafferty. He was not of our faith, and though he had lived among Latter-day Saint people for well over 25 years, he did not really understand our doctrine or the gospel. He was a splendid man to work for, and I will be ever grateful for his generosity and his many kindnesses. His patient tutoring in the fine points of the game of golf helped me become successful in some of my youthful competitive experiences and also allowed me to enjoy a lifetime of recreational golf. On occasion his language, wrapped in a very heavy Scottish accent, could be just a little bit colorful. When my work didn't meet Alex's expectations or when I made a mistake in serving a patron, he would, in a very soft but very firm Scottish voice, utter an expletive followed by the same question: "David, my boy, will you ever make something of yourself?"

I still remember the exact words Alex used when I finally gathered the courage to inform him that I had accepted a call from a prophet of God to serve for two years as a missionary in Australia; hence, I would be leaving his employ. On this occasion his response was preceded by several expletives and then the declaration, "David, my boy, you'll never make anything of yourself by fluttering around the world speaking about religion."

A day or two before I departed for my mission, I stopped by to say good-bye to my good friend Alex. As I shook his hand and offered expressions of appreciation, he drew me close and placed in my hand an envelope. We both had a tear or two in our eyes as I quickly walked to my car. I drove for just a few minutes to a nearby park where, in the solitude of the surroundings, I read his note and found he had placed a goodly sum of

money in the envelope to help me finance my mission.

About one year later, while I was serving in Adelaide, Australia, I received a note from Alex. The note said: "David, my boy, they tell me a missionary needs a new suit after one year. Please, with this money, buy you a suit made of the finest Scottish wool."

A few days after returning from Australia, I stopped by the golf course to renew our acquaintance. Alex asked if I was ready to play golf. I told him my days of serious golf were over, as I had sold my clubs and car to help defray the costs of my mission and, in addition, it was long past time when I really needed to get serious about my education.

He replied, starting with the usual expletive: "David, my boy, you will never make something of yourself if you don't play golf. You go right into that golf shop and pick out a set of clubs of your choice."

I did just that, and after nearly 50 years I still have those clubs. Of course I didn't appreciate Alex's colorful language, but I will ever be grateful for the lessons of honesty, integrity, and generosity that I learned while in his employ.

Over the years I have often reflected on Alex's question: Will you ever make something of yourself? Alex was, in his own way, expressing his displeasure with me. He was questioning my capacity to follow directions; he was questioning my attention to the tasks at hand and my job commitment. He was also questioning whether there was a desire on my part to be a successful, productive, and contributing adult. I have pondered those questions over and over again. I must admit that they were great questions then and they still remain great questions today. I am still a work in progress. I have also concluded that Alex was questioning my life's achievements and not so much life's journey. His question, however, does beg the question, What constitutes success in this life?

### Acquire Christlike Attributes

Perhaps a better question for us to focus on is not whether we will make something of ourselves and, therefore, be successful in the eyes of the world but rather the question posed by the Savior Himself: "Therefore, what manner of men [and women] ought ye to be?" You recall that the response was, in His words, "Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). Further, the Savior indicated, "For that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do" (v. 21).

What manner of men and women ought ye to be? In my ponderings, I continue to ask: What are the attributes of a Christlike life? What is the appropriate pattern to use in coping with the challenges of life? What does it mean to be "even as I am"? I certainly don't know all that is expected, but attributes like love of God and fellowmen, compassion, example, obedience, service, and keeping covenants may be just a few.

Recently an acquaintance of ours, and a good, close friend of our daughter and son-in-law, passed away after a gallant and prolonged battle with a brain tumor. Just prior to his passing, one of his friends sent a bit of prose poetry expressing his feelings to our friend's wife. With their permission I share its contents, not for its literary excellence, but rather for the feeling conveyed. It starts:

[Dear] Diane,  
 Please tell Harold "thank you,"  
 For changing my life,  
 And showing me an example  
 Of priesthood leadership,  
 Of caring for the one,  
 Of selfless, tireless service,  
 And true, Christlike love.

*Please tell Harold of the many memories  
 That I carry with me each day  
 That strengthen me,  
 And guide me —*

*Memories he gave me  
 When I served with him. . . .*

*Please tell Harold how his example,  
 As a loving husband  
 And kind father,  
 As a faithful servant of the Lord,  
 Full of humor,  
 Full of vision,  
 Has given me a standard to reach for  
 And has blessed the lives of my own wife  
 and children.*

*Please tell Harold it was a great honor  
 To have known him in this mortal life  
 And to have served with him.*

*Please tell Harold of the tears I shed,  
 And the pain in my heart,  
 To know he will soon return  
 And report.*

*Please tell Harold I love him  
 For his kindness,  
 His example,  
 And his friendship.*

*Please tell Harold I will miss him  
 But will eagerly prepare myself  
 To rejoice with him again  
 In the heavenly courts of the Most High God.*

*Please tell Harold I will serve the Lord  
 With all my heart, might, mind, and strength  
 In memory of his example,  
 And dedication,  
 And devotion to the Lord.*

*Please tell Harold . . .  
 Thank you.<sup>1</sup>*

The "please tell Harold" attributes may also be worthy of our incorporating in *our* lives. When virtues such as example, priesthood power, caring for the one, service, love, being

a loving husband and father, kindness, friendship, devotion, and dedication can be ascribed to us, as they were so beautifully to Harold, certainly our lives can be deemed Christlike, hence, fulfilling and successful.

President Thomas S. Monson often refers to his Scottish heritage and his experiences as a young boy living in close proximity to his Scottish grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. I have to wonder how many times he heard something similar to “Tommy, my boy, are you ever going to amount to something?” I suspect that as a boy with a very wide variety of interests, a very creative and imaginative mind, and a whole lot of energy, he may have been asked that question more than just a few times.

President Monson’s life gives us a pattern to follow in our own lives. This is particularly true in what I call his private ministry. His public ministry, on the other hand, is an open book, filled with outstanding service at the ward, stake, mission, and general Church levels. I doubt there has been anyone in this dispensation more devoted to each of his ecclesiastical assignments than President Thomas S. Monson.

From time to time we get a glimpse into his private ministry. Serving, being concerned, reaching out and blessing the one, and offering encouragement and comfort—these are all integral parts of his private ministry.

Recently a lovely neighbor across the street from me required a short stay in a rehabilitation facility. When my wife, Barbara, and I visited her, she couldn’t wait to tell us that President Monson had dropped by their sacrament meeting.

“He was so close,” she exclaimed, “that I could reach out and touch him.”

Oh how thrilled she was to feel that the president of the Church was concerned about her.

President Monson lives by the creed he often teaches: The five most important words in the English language are *I am proud of you*. The four most important are *What is your opinion?* The

three most important are *If you please*. The two most important are *Thank you*. The least important is *I*.<sup>2</sup>

The Savior often used parables to teach important lessons. Likewise, President Monson loves to use stories to illustrate his teachings. President Henry B. Eyring, reflecting on President Monson’s use of stories, said that you will think you have heard the story before, but if you are patient and listen intently, you will find the stories are not the same because the Spirit will prompt you to receive the message in a different way.

One of the stories President Monson uses comes from his days as a deacon. He and the other members of his quorum were apparently assigned to be Eskimos in the ward’s road show. President Monson’s sister was playing the part of Lady Liberty. When his sister came down with a severe case of laryngitis just at the critical performance time, it was feared that she would not be able to speak her lines and the show would be impaired. The “Eskimos” decided to do something about this situation. They gathered in the room in the basement of their meetinghouse and knelt in prayer. They sought the Lord’s intervening Spirit in behalf of President Monson’s sister. At the appointed time, Lady Liberty was able to deliver her lines with a clear voice. President Monson’s sister remembered the experience as being a miracle in her life and was grateful for those Eskimos.

This very simple story reminds us that President Monson has always been a person of great faith and a person of prayer. He uses those great gifts to bless the lives of many today. He is an example of what manner of men and women we ought to be—people of faith and people of prayer. Prayer is essential to our own personal strength and conviction. Remember Nephi’s question to his disbelieving brethren: “Have ye inquired of the Lord?” (1 Nephi 15:8). President Monson’s life of service is a pattern we could use to define and structure our own lives.

### **Pray for Help in Making Decisions**

Many of you are at a stage of life when you will be making decisions that will shape your earthly lives as well as your eternal lives. Some of you are in the process of making decisions about your education. Others of you may be contemplating a mission. Many may be endeavoring to decide what you wish to do for a career or life's work. Perhaps some of you may be trying to decide if someone is the right person to be your eternal companion. These decisions will be much easier if you take them before the Lord in prayer.

A few of you may be struggling with sin and are trying to decide if you wish to be cleansed by the atoning power of Jesus Christ. Some of you may be faltering in your testimonies of the gospel and trying to determine what can be done to reverse the direction. Decisions about these and other important matters will have a huge impact on what manner of men and women you will be and what you will accomplish during your lifetime, or, using my friend Alex's words, what you will make of yourselves.

Life's really critical and life-shaping decisions are usually very difficult to make. There are always those little ifs, ands, or buts that tend to complicate and delay the answer. I have often wished that there was a magic pill we could take that would cause us to always make the optimal decision. But lacking that magic pill, may I offer just one suggestion to aid you in your decision-making process? Seek the participation of our Father in Heaven through humble prayer, and then have the faith and determination to follow His counsel as conveyed by the Holy Spirit. The Lord asks that we study things out in our minds and then ask Him. He promises, "I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right" (D&C 9:8). The manner of men and women you will become will be enhanced as you listen to and obey the still, small voice. Remember, part of listening is "feel[ing] that it is right."

In the United States, we've just concluded another baseball season. The World Series has ended, and a new champion has been crowned. Well over 50 years ago, a very fine athlete began playing left field for the Boston Red Sox. His career in baseball was interrupted on at least two different occasions by calls to serve in the military as a fighter pilot. The media referred to him as the "Splendid Splinter" because he was very thin in stature but very adept at hitting a baseball. His major claim to fame as it relates to sports is that he was the very last major league player to have a batting average over .400 for the entire year. This means he was successful in getting on base because of hitting the baseball more than four times for each 10 times he was up to bat. No one has been able to duplicate his feat in the last half century. That player's name was Ted Williams.

Many years after Ted completed his baseball career, the public learned something very interesting about him—his eyesight, as it turned out, was better than 20/20. And with this excellent and extraordinary eyesight, Ted had just a little advantage in that he could see the ball a little better than other players and had an additional microsecond to determine if he should swing at the pitch. He could see if the ball was spinning or if the ball was going to curve in or out of the strike zone.

We who have been baptized and have received the gift of the Holy Ghost as a constant companion also have an advantage when it comes to making difficult decisions. Just as success in real estate matters is described as "location, location, location," taking advantage of the Holy Ghost is listen, listen, listen!

### **Don't Be Discouraged**

I sometimes worry and am somewhat embarrassed, frankly, that my generation has burdened your generation with issues and challenges that we should have resolved. While much progress has been made in making life better, longer, safer, and more fulfilling, there

remains much to lament relating to greed, relationships, and environment, to name just a few. We are facing the uncertainties that arise out of the turbulent times we are in. It could be very easy to be discouraged and perhaps even be a little depressed as we think about the array of potential impacts. The uncertainties of the job market coupled with significant economic dislocation all add to the uneasiness of our day. Nations continue to contend against one another.

In spite of all of this, my young friends, we need not fear nor take counsel from our fears. The scriptures remind us that if we are *prepared*, if we are *obedient*, and if we are *members* of the Lord's Church, we need not fear what the future holds. "The righteous need not fear" (1 Nephi 22:22; see also Alma 1:4; D&C 10:55). What manner of men and women we will be, in part, will be influenced by how well we handle the fearsome and unforeseen aspects of life. Realizing that real life is made up of struggles, problems, mistakes, opportunities, and lessons, please remember the old Chinese proverb that says, "The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials." Stated in the Lord's terms, "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11).

In spite of all the world's uncertainties and shortcomings, there is so very much to be grateful for and very excited about. I am an optimist. I have come to believe that 2008 is the most exciting time in the history of the world to be alive and have the supernal blessing of having the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ available to us. My very spine tingles as I watch the gospel being established in the hearts and minds of Father in Heaven's children around this globe.

I suspect few, if any, of you know what occurs at Church headquarters each year on the first Friday of December. That is the day traditionally set aside for the convening of the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes,

as directed by the Lord in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Under the direction of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve and the Presiding Bishopric all meet together to determine how the resources of the Church will be used in the coming year. It's exciting to see what comes out of that meeting. It's exciting to see the many new places of worship that are authorized and constructed. The number of new temples continues to grow. Bishops all over the world are provided the resources to seek out and help the poor. Missionaries in more than 350 missions are sustained. Projects to accelerate the work of temples are approved. Funds are set aside to facilitate higher education and religious education. The work of the Lord marches on to achieve its prophetic destiny.

I take courage when I think of the great statement of faith made by the Prophet Joseph Smith: "No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing."<sup>3</sup> Isn't it exciting to realize that you and I will have the opportunity to be at the forefront of this miracle that is destined to occur? What manner of men and women you will be will in part be a function of your devotion and assistance in moving His kingdom forward. Along with devotion, much self-discipline is required. Jim Rohn, a noted motivational speaker, said, "Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment."<sup>4</sup>

I love sacred music, particularly hymns of praise or motivation. One such hymn we often sing is "Come, Let Us Anew." The words were penned in the 1700s by Charles Wesley, and the music is attributed to James Lucas. This marvelous and outstanding choir from the Utah State University will sing this beautiful hymn for us as we conclude our evening together. Latter-day Saints gather in sacrament meetings, devotionals, and other settings to sing, pray, and renew covenants and commitment, as well as to offer mutual encouragement one to another. We get a synergistic type of renewal when we meet together.

Music plays an important role in this process. It has the capacity to soothe our souls and sensitize our spirits on heavenly things. The Lord has reminded us that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me” (D&C 25:12). Please take note of the lyrics of this hymn of encouragement:

*Come, let us anew our journey pursue,  
Roll round with the year,  
And never stand still till the Master appear.  
His adorable will let us gladly fulfill,  
And our talents improve  
By the patience of hope and the labor of love. . . .*

*Our life as a dream, our time as a stream  
Glide swiftly away,  
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay;  
For the arrow is flown and the moments are gone.  
The millennial year  
Presses on to our view, and eternity's here. . . .*

*Oh, that each in the day of His coming may say,  
“I have fought my way thru;  
I have finished the work thou didst give me to do.”  
Oh, that each from his Lord may receive the glad  
word:  
“Well and faithfully done;  
Enter into my joy and sit down on my throne.”<sup>5</sup>*

The message of encouragement conveyed in this hymn is clear. It suggests that in our quest to become as the Savior suggested, “even as I am,” we must often renew our enthusiasm and never stand still in our good works until the Master appears. If we delay, time will pass us by and the fugitive moment will forever be gone. Each of us, in the day of His coming, will want to report, “I have fought my way thru; I have finished the work thou didst give me to do.” And great will be the feeling when in response we hear, “Well and faithfully done; enter into my joy and sit down on my throne.” This can be our lot if our objective is to be the

manner of men and women the great I Am suggests we be.

Often members of our Church are critically scrutinized and sometimes held to a higher standard than our friends of other faiths. Have you ever noticed that often in reporting the news the media will resort to headlines like “Mormon Bishop Commits . . .,” “Former LDS Missionary Involved in . . .,” or “Mormon Mom Indicted for . . .”? What we do in our anonymity is just as important as what we do when observed in public. Often there are eyes watching us from many unseen vantage points. In many ways we live in a glass house.

A few months ago I was repairing a broken water line. In the process, my clothes got wet and muddy and my arms were covered in grease. When I discovered that I needed a small part to repair the line, rather than taking the time to clean myself up, I jumped in the car and drove to Home Depot. As I was carefully examining the array of parts to make sure that I purchased the right size with the right thread spacing, a man I did not know walked down the aisle and passed behind me. As he walked a few feet beyond me, I heard him say, “That doesn’t look like the Presiding Bishop to me.” I was embarrassed beyond words because I had failed to live up to the standard expected. This time I asked myself critically, “David, my boy, are you ever going to learn?”

### **Focus on What Is Most Important**

Ambition and hard work are vital ingredients in achieving worthy objectives. You are a generation of great promise. You have been endowed with many God-given gifts. You’re bright; you’re intelligent. Those of you who use your intelligence to achieve well-conceived goals are destined to be successful. But those of you who are intelligent, goal-oriented, and ambitious will likely be the manner of men and women our Father in Heaven is depending upon to move His kingdom forward.

Near the end of my mission, the World Cup Golf Tournament was held at the Royal Melbourne golf course in Melbourne, Australia, and amateur golfers were given an opportunity to play with a professional in the pretournament practice rounds. On the very last day of my mission, I was able to participate in this practice round, although I won't bore you with the details of how that occurred. When it was my turn to draw from the hat the name of the professional I was to play with that day, I drew the name of Arnold Palmer. Talk about intimidation associated with speaking at general conference! That level of intimidation was only a very small part of the amount I felt the second I saw "Arnold Palmer" on my slip. I, of course, hadn't had a golf club in my hands for over two years, and I was, to use the vernacular of today, totally stressed out!

I don't remember much about the round of golf except that I played very poorly. On the 17th hole we hit our tee shots. We walked a few feet, and I hit my second shot, and shortly thereafter my third before we arrived at Mr. Palmer's ball. The young Australian man caddying for Mr. Palmer was trying very, very hard to please him. I overheard the caddy tell Mr. Palmer that on the left the topography sloped, with a stream meandering down and hidden from view. He then said that on the right the grass had been allowed to grow very, very long and was really difficult to swing a club through.

Mr. Palmer very precisely placed his club back into the bag and quietly but firmly said to the young caddy, "Please don't clutter my mind with what is out on the right, and I'm not terribly interested in what is on the left. The only piece of information that I require from you is the exact distance from this ball to the flag on the green."

My, that was a powerful learning experience for me. I suddenly realized the criticality of focusing on what is important and not being

distracted by what may be on the left or what might be on the right. Focus is so essential in achieving our goals. Too many of us are concerned about what's on the right and what's on the left, and we fail to adequately focus on the principal objective that is right down the middle. When we fail to focus on the right things, it is difficult to become the manner of men and women that we desperately want to be. In this endeavor, remember that the Lord has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

I pray that we will always endeavor in our lives to focus on matters of most importance. I testify that we are on the Lord's errand. We are blessed to be led by living prophets. I have been blessed to have served under the direction of four prophets of this dispensation. I think I know something about prophets and testify that Thomas Spencer Monson is a prophet of God in every sense of the word.

I know we have a loving and living Father in Heaven. We are His sons and daughters. I'm grateful for His Only Begotten Son, who is our Savior, who atoned for our sins. For all of you who may feel lost, or feel you are devoid of hope, or feel that sin has impaired your progress, I testify that His Atonement is available and His mercy endureth forever. I know that Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration.

I take this opportunity to invoke the blessings of heaven upon each one of you. This blessing I invoke, praying that you may be responsive and determined to be the manner of men and women our Father in Heaven wishes for you to be, and I do so by the authority vested in me and in the holy name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, amen.

#### Notes

1. Christian Weibell to Diane Lefrandt, personal correspondence; used by permission.



2. Originally from Robert W. Woodruff; see Thomas S. Monson, in *CR*, October 1987, 82; or "A Doorway Called Love," *Ensign*, November 1987, 68–69.

3. *HC* 4:540.

4. Jim Rohn, *The Treasury of Quotes* (Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, 2001), 40.

5. "Come, Let Us Anew," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 217.