

Let Us Walk Together

CARR KRUEGER

Many of the defining experiences of my life were obtained here at BYU, on what I believe to be hallowed ground. I solidified my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I confirmed my desire to fulfill a mission, I was introduced to my beautiful wife, I was educated with the basics of my occupation, and I learned the importance of service to others.

If you will indulge me, I would like to share one lesson learned here that took place entirely by accident. Frankly, I am embarrassed to relate it to you—and wouldn't—except that the lesson I learned might prove insightful to one or two of you new graduates.

As a friend and I were walking past the Smoot Administration Building on our way toward the Marriott Center for a Tuesday morning devotional, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, then president of the university, hurriedly came out.

No one was within 50 yards of my friend and me—and now President Holland. He merged onto the sidewalk fewer than 10 feet in front of us but began to increase the distance between us. He was clearly more anxious to get to the devotional on time than we were. In my youthful irreverence—and thinking I would be clever—I muttered to my friend, intentionally loud enough for Elder Holland

to hear, “You’d think he’d at least slow down to say hello to a couple of his students.” (As you can see, the IQ required to attend BYU was not nearly as high 25 years ago as it is today.)

It was then that this master teacher taught me a lesson I have kept with me my entire life. Without the slightest pause in his step he simply stated, loud enough for me to hear and profound enough for me to learn from and to remember: “I have much to do. But if you will step up with me, we’ll walk together.”

I have thought often of this exchange and from it learned a number of lessons.

- The most obvious is discretion. What kind of a goofball says something like this to the president of the university—the man who with a stroke of a pen can revoke scholarships or do any number of other education-ending actions?
- Additionally I learned that when a leader speaks, even seemingly insignificant exchanges in passing can have a lasting influence. I have spent 25 years considering and learning from this brief exchange.

Carr Krueger was president of the BYU Alumni Association when this BYU commencement address was given on 22 April 2004.

- Elder Holland taught me forgiveness. When the natural man might have responded with an equally inconsiderate retort, he chose instead to say something to uplift.
 - He taught me that he was engaged in doing good works when he said, “I have much to do.”
 - He invited me to participate *with* him.
 - While reaching out to me, he wasn’t distracted from the bigger picture concerning what he was about and what he was called to do.
 - Elder Holland invited me to lengthen my stride and to improve my own actions when he said, “Step up with me.”
 - He didn’t tell me what to do but instead led with example: “Come join me, and we’ll travel together.”
- Serve BYU by mentoring those who follow you.
 - Serve BYU by donating your time and financial support every year.
 - Serve BYU by never doing anything that would reflect poorly on its name.
 - Serve BYU by being the employee/ manager/ owner/ citizen who only acts with the highest integrity.
 - Serve BYU by strengthening the testimony of the gospel that was nurtured here.

This embarrassing five-second exchange represents only an infinitesimally small fraction of what I have gained by attending BYU. I owe a debt to this university—greater than I have the capacity to repay. I would suggest that each of you as well has a greater debt than you realize.

Make a commitment today to serve Brigham Young University and begin repaying that debt!

I congratulate you on your accomplishments to date.

As president of your Alumni Association, I hereby confer on each of you lifetime membership in the Brigham Young University Alumni Association and welcome you to this honored fraternity of more than 350,000.

I invite each of you to “step up with me.” Let us “walk together” in service to this great university and the students it produces. I pray that you may go on to reap even greater rewards than you receive today—namely, that you graduate *life* with honors! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.