

# *Men and Women for All Seasons*

BRIGHAM RUSSELL FRANDBSEN

If you could choose one season to live in permanently, which would it be? Honestly, living here in Provo the past few years makes it hard for me to decide. I grew up in La Cañada, California, convinced that there was only one season. Leaves changing colors and snow covering the ground were the stuff of fairy tales. Yes, I was one of the freshman herd from California and Arizona who gleefully galloped around outside the first night of snow and then froze the next day when we realized all we had packed for the year were shorts and sandals. Once I was safely bundled up in the jacket I had my mother quickly send from home, I found this variation from the perpetually mild summer days of Southern California exhilarating.

I had never seen anything in nature so pristine and pure as the sun coming through a snow-brushed Rock Canyon the morning after a night of snow. A whole new world opened up to me of skiing, sledding, and rolling Volkswagen Bug-sized snowballs around the DT field. And, of course, then comes spring—with that week in March or April when all of the trees on campus seem to burst with bright blossoms in unison, bringing meaning to the phrase “popcorn popping on the apricot tree.” In the fall the red-turned oaks on the mountainside were like nothing I had ever seen at

home, where palm trees remain the same dull green year-round. I marveled at the Creator who would tilt the earth relative to the plane of its orbit around the sun *just* enough to bring color and variety to our lives. I had to get out of Southern California long enough to find it.

That same Creator, who so often tucks natural treasures away where you only find them if you go looking, has also placed treasures of truth and understanding all around us. We would miss it all if we never ventured out of the narrow world defined by our majors and our natural inclinations. Just as I was lucky enough to make it out of the pseudo-paradise of Southern California to discover something as simple as the changing seasons, we have all been blessed to have had—and hopefully taken—the opportunity to discover these treasures that are reserved for the adventuresome learner, simply by being given the opportunity to come to this university.

In fact, have you ever thought about what the word *university* means? It sounds an awful lot like *universe*, and actually these two words come from the same Latin root meaning “the whole.” I love the feeling conveyed by this

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*Brigham Russell Frandsen spoke as the representative of his graduating class at BYU commencement on 12 August 2004.*

concept of “the whole” (that is w-h-o-l-e). A profound implication of the theory of relativity is that a whole can be more than the sum of the separate parts. A heavy atom such as uranium has more mass than the sum of its fragments if it is broken apart.

The university is the same way. Together, with our varied interests, abilities, and fields of expertise, we make up something much more than our separate sums. Believe me, no one is more arrogant in thinking he has a handle on how the universe works than a physics student who has just solved the Schrödinger equation to explain hydrogen, the simplest of all atoms. But that same physics student would be helpless with his methods to explain the complicated interactions of nucleic acids in living cells. We need biochemists for that. And even the biochemists among us—who are striving to understand the very workings of life—don’t have the tools to understand the intricate responses of the human mind: hence, psychology.

Even with all of a psychologist’s training, can a person really explain being moved almost to tears by the sounds of Mendelssohn’s violin concerto? Only the performer drawing the bow across the strings begins to understand that. Although each of these fields makes a unique contribution to our collective body of knowledge, some of our greatest realizations are in finding the connections between seemingly disparate fields. Some of my most satisfying moments come when I can apply a principle learned in economics to elucidate a difficult concept in physics. These kinds of moments show us again and again that all truth really can be circumscribed in one great whole.

Each discipline is essential to the university living up to its Latin root as *whole* or *complete*, but, more important, we ourselves would not be whole people if we put on intellectual

blinders and shut out everything that doesn’t directly touch our individual fields. Instead we must try to embody the attitude of the namesake of this university, Brigham Young, who said:

*How gladly would we understand every principle pertaining to science and art, and become thoroughly acquainted with every intricate operation of nature, and with all the chemical changes that are constantly going on around us! How delightful this would be, and what a boundless field of truth and power is open for us to explore! [JD 9:167]*

This doesn’t mean we have to go back and major in everything—although I’m sure some of us here have tried. Our appetites have already been whetted by our BYU education. We have been exposed to Nietzsche and Newton, Darwin and Dante. The challenge before us now is to continue in the curiosity we have cultivated as students and to make learning in all areas a lifelong passion—not merely a temporary phase to be shed along with these robes. In my view, two of the greatest causes we can be engaged in are the pursuit of truth and to seek to improve the well-being of others. The One who perfectly embodies both of these gave us the directive “Be ye therefore perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This may be more accurately understood to mean “Be ye therefore complete, or whole,” and is a challenge for us to emulate Him who is the Master of all subjects.

How much I would have missed out on if I had never left my familiar surroundings long enough to discover something as simple as the changing seasons! Similarly, let us continue to do what we have learned from our university experience and seek out truth and understanding everywhere it can be found. Let’s be men and women for all seasons.

Thank you.