

Brigham Young University 2004–2005

Speeches

BYU Spring 2005 Commencement

EARL C. TINGEY

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BYU Spring 2005 Commencement

EARL C. TINGEY

The First Presidency has extended to me this wonderful opportunity to conduct and provide remarks at the April 2005 commencement exercises. I am honored and privileged to be with all of you this afternoon.

I bring the love and best wishes of the Church Board of Education and the Brigham Young University Board of Trustees. This board consists of the First Presidency; Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, and Robert D. Hales of the Twelve; myself; Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, general president of the Relief Society; and Sister Susan W. Tanner, general president of the Young Women organization. Elder W. Rolfe Kerr, commissioner of Church Education, serves under the direction of the board of trustees.

The board meets each month and provides prayerful guidance to Brigham Young University, BYU—Hawaii, BYU—Idaho, the LDS Business College, and seminaries and institutes of the Church Educational System (CES). The members of the board have had many decades of experience in educational and business matters. They are wise men and women. They are directed by the Spirit and are presided over by President Gordon B. Hinckley, our prophet, seer, and revelator. In all of our decisions and deliberations, we have one key concern—and that is you, the student.

We anticipate that you will have a gospel-centered education—one that is professional in quality and overseen by instructors and administrators who are guided by the Holy Ghost.

It takes a lot of resources to operate a university the size of BYU. Of these resources, including money, much comes from tithing, the widow's mite. The proper use and allocation of this money is an important responsibility the board exercises.

You are very blessed to have a General Authority, Elder Cecil O. Samuelson, Jr., as president of Brigham Young University. He is a former member of the Presidency of the Seventy. He and I served together for several years in this presidency. He is an inspired Church leader and has the full confidence of the Church Board of Education and the BYU Board of Trustees. My wife and I are honored to call Elder and Sister Samuelson our friends.

We are delighted that you have such lovely buildings, dormitories, and programs to enhance your educational experience. We are confident you are appreciative of these blessings.

Earl C. Tingey was a member of the Presidency of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this commencement address was given on 21 April 2005.

We are certainly proud of each student and graduate. We honor your parents and family who have assisted you as you have obtained your education. We know they are proud of you.

I would like to address four related subjects this afternoon.

1. The Graduate: A Challenge to the Future

To each of you receiving a diploma today, I congratulate you. The goal you set years ago has now been reached. You are a graduate of Brigham Young University.

Speaking of goals, I remember the following words from an unknown author that might express the feelings and thoughts you are having at this moment:

*Oh that I could go—yet stay,
Have tomorrow, keep today,
Cherish, hold my yesterday.
My yesterday, now treasured dear,
Was once tomorrow seen with fear.*

I believe you will cherish your treasured yesterdays in your memories of BYU. But, speaking of fear, you may have heard this statement: “Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there.”¹

I am thinking of the fears you might have had as you commenced your schooling and continued on. Some of you may have initially feared that you might not be accepted into BYU. But you were. You might have experienced fear as you selected a major and then changed it—I hope not too many times. Individual classes may have loomed before you as significant challenges—even approaching a feeling of fear.

Concern about your living arrangements and even who your roommates might be could easily have resulted in fear. For some, being away from home and family for the first time brought a feeling of fear. Could having insufficient funds and money to continue with your

education become a fearful thing to contemplate? Yes, if you are a normal college student!

Accepting a mission call, interrupting your schooling, and then returning to pick up where you left off would be of concern to many—possibly resulting in some fear.

And to those who are married and are beginning a family the increased challenges could often be overwhelming. How could you possibly maintain your scholastic standing and still have a strong marriage and family?

Yes, most of you have experienced some fear as you have completed your degree. But remember, when fear knocks at the door and faith answers, fear will be gone.

Congratulations on finding and developing faith in your years at Brigham Young University. Faith is belief plus action—in most cases, *your* action.

The religious aspects of your BYU experience are designed to build your faith. That is why every professor, instructor, mentor, and administrator is charged to do his or her job in such a way that you, the student, will learn the necessary aspects of your college education within the framework of gospel principles and faith.

Having faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice and in the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ helps you to overcome, by faith, each and every obstacle and challenge you will experience, have experienced at BYU, and might possibly experience in the future.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in your ability to accomplish all tasks before you is a marvelous gift to acquire and appreciate as you now complete your BYU schooling. This faith is one of the gifts of the Spirit as taught in the revelations.

All of that fear I have mentioned is now behind you. It has been replaced with faith. You have completed the education that qualifies you to receive your diploma. You should now look to the future not only with the

college education you received here but also with the faith you developed during your stay here. That exercise of looking to the future is why we refer to this event not as a graduation service but as a commencement service. You are commencing your future with faith.

As you look to the future, I would encourage you to remember the following words by British poet Christopher Logue in honor of Guillaume Apollinaire:

*Come to the edge.
We might fall.
Come to the edge.
It's too high!
COME TO THE EDGE!
And they came,
and he pushed,
and they flew.²*

Yes, to some extent we are now pushing you out into the future. Some of you may feel this pushing from parents or a spouse. But we believe you will fly and not fall.

You are now entering real life. Your schooling might be referred to as preparation or practice for real life. Illustrating the difference between practicing for and being in real life, President Spencer W. Kimball often told the story of the young soldier in basic training who wrote back to his folks: "Yesterday we learned how to throw hand grenades. We practiced with duds first, and my best throw was 30 yards. Today we threw live grenades, and I threw 43 yards."

Real life experiences result in consequences. I recently read an article in a national magazine about the challenge of some college graduates being unwilling to grow up, step forward, and accept the full responsibilities of mature adulthood.

Let me quote just one paragraph from this excellent article:

Social scientists are starting to realize that a permanent shift has taken place in the way we live our lives. In the past, people moved from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence to adulthood, but today there is a new, intermediate phase along the way. The years from 18 until 25 and even beyond have become a distinct and separate life stage, a strange, transitional never-never land between adolescence and adulthood in which people stall for a few extra years, putting off the iron cage of adult responsibility that constantly threatens to crash down on them. They're betwixt and between. You could call them twixters.³

The article notes the indecision some college graduates have in seeking employment after graduation and in accepting the responsibilities of marriage and family. It uses a rather cruel phrase in describing such individuals as "permanent adolescents, . . . twentysomething Peter Pans" who never "grow up."⁴

The picture on the cover of the issue with this interesting and thought-provoking article shows a college graduate sitting in a sandbox.

Now the concerns of this article, which, unfortunately, describes an epidemic trend in some parts of the country, must never describe a graduate of Brigham Young University. You know better. You have been better trained. You have an eternal view of life that helps you see beyond and through the shallowness and emptiness of allowing a self-centered adolescent period following college graduation. We expect more from you. We have faith in you. You have developed faith in yourself.

You are now entering the real life of family, employment, increasing Church service, and even more significant responsibility.

You are like a ship embarking on the ocean of life. As you move out into the ocean of real life as a newly constructed ship, remember that ships are not built to rest in safe harbors. There will be storms, large and dangerous winds and waves, and sometimes uncharted shorelines. Fortunately your education, good common

sense, personal inspiration through the Spirit, and lighthouses—who are the inspired watchmen on the tower we know as apostles and prophets—will guide you to harbors of safety.

You are entitled to have the assurance that your training at Brigham Young University is of the very finest. You are well equipped to steer and maneuver your ship of life through successful journeys to safe harbors.

Some of you are single. Others of you are married, many with growing families. Whatever your current circumstances, as you accept the responsibilities of marriage and family life and continue to provide loving and faithful service to the Church and to your community and fellowman, you will find that your commitment to the ideals of Brigham Young University will sustain and support you throughout your life.

The Lord will honor and bless you as you have honored and lived the exemplary ideals of BYU, which are the basic principles of the Church of Jesus Christ.

2. The Esteemed Ranking of Brigham Young University

Did you know that your alma mater, Brigham Young University, continues to receive the highest marks when compared to other esteemed universities in the United States? Let me give you several of the many areas in which BYU has excelled.

A recent edition of the *Wall Street Journal* rating regional business schools in North America ranked Brigham Young University's Marriott School of Business as number 5 in the entire nation. BYU was exceeded only by Purdue, Vanderbilt, Ohio State, and the University of Maryland.

When asked which MBA programs employers depend on to produce graduates with high ethical standards, the number 2 school was Brigham Young University, second only to Yale University.

The same report also ranked schools named most often when asked which MBA programs excel in accounting disciplines. Brigham Young University was rated number 5.⁵

U.S. News and World Report recently published a 2005 edition of *America's Best Colleges*.⁶ Let me share with you several of their rankings of Brigham Young University:

- Students graduating with the least amount of debt—number 9 (p. 67). (You may or may not agree, but that is what they concluded.)
- The school with the best value or price—number 25 (p. 64).

In the 2005 edition of *America's Best Graduate Schools*, also put out by *U.S. News and World Report*, the BYU Law School was rated number 34.⁷ And in 2004 the BYU undergraduate accounting program was rated number 6 for the year 2005.⁸

A year ago the Ballroom Dance Company took first place in both the modern and Latin American formation competitions at the prestigious Blackpool Dance Festival in England. The company enters the competition every three years and “has won first place in both divisions each of the last six times it has competed, and 18 times overall since 1971.”⁹

BYU was recently ranked 17th in the nation for the number of students who received their undergraduate degree here and then received graduate fellowships from the National Science Foundation.¹⁰

BYU's faculty continue to be honored and recognized in many fields and disciplines for their outstanding achievements.

The *Princeton Review* recently published their 2005 edition of *The Best 357 Colleges*.¹¹ I was absolutely fascinated with several of the rankings given to Brigham Young University, and I share them with you. Brigham Young University was rated number 1 in the following five categories:

- great college library (p. 32)
- stone-cold sober school, beer usage reported low (which category the author entitled “Got Milk?”) (pp. 41, 43)
- hard liquor usage reported low (p. 42)
- marijuana usage reported low (p. 42)
- most religious students (p. 38)

In the same publication, BYU was rated highly in the next two categories:

- Best quality of life—number 6 (p. 36)
- Happy students—number 7 (p. 34)

In the *Princeton Review's* publication *Best 117 Law Schools*, BYU was ranked number 4 in overall academic excellence.¹²

The newly published *Princeton Review's* 2006 edition of *America's Best Value Colleges* rated Brigham Young University as third best in the nation in terms of value for each tuition dollar.¹³

These interesting and most remarkable ratings attest to the fact that Brigham Young University is truly an unusual school of the most high academic excellence and of extremely high moral values. What an honor for you to be a graduate of that kind of university.

3. BYU Moral Values and the Honor Code

I believe the high moral values reflected in these various studies are the direct result of the fact that BYU is sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a university where academic instruction is combined with gospel instruction.

The high achievements of Brigham Young University and its faculty and students are also the fruit of an inspired code of living we call the BYU Honor Code.

To honor is to hold in high esteem. We honor a person or institution by recognizing the entity's good name and showing respect for its fame and accomplishments. Living with

honor results in becoming someone of distinction. Showing honor results in deference to a higher plane or standing.

You remember that the boy Samuel earned the love and respect of the Lord through the quality of his life. It is recorded that he “grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.”¹⁴

For Samuel's adherence to and honor of God, the Lord said of him, “Them that honour me I will honour.”¹⁵

What does it mean to observe the Honor Code? Will the Lord recognize you and honor you as you have honored the code of living that distinguishes Brigham Young University from all other institutions of higher learning?

I would like to address the Honor Code and its relevance to you, the graduating student.

The online information about the BYU Honor Code describes it as follows:

BYU exists to provide a university education in an atmosphere consistent with the principles of the Church of Jesus Christ. This environment is preserved through adherence to a code of conduct called the Honor Code that reflects those ideals.

Initiated by students in 1949, the Honor Code emphasizes being honest, living a chaste and virtuous life, abstaining from alcohol and tobacco, using clean language and following other values encompassed in the doctrines of the Church. The code is supplemented by additional guidelines on dress, grooming and housing.

*Students and faculty are attracted by the opportunity to study and work among those who share their faith and standards. In a survey of BYU alumni, 77 percent cited their desire to “obtain a spiritual, religiously based education” as a very important or extremely important factor in their decision to attend BYU.*¹⁶

Your initial endorsement and continued endorsement from your ecclesiastical leader—who in most cases is your bishop or branch president—is truly remarkable and should be

reflected in your personal moral values as a graduate of Brigham Young University.

In the Church we know a little bit about covenants. When you sign the Honor Code, you enter into a commitment that might be compared to reaffirming certain covenants you have made. In the words of the scriptures, it might be compared to making oaths.

In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read that “oaths are solemn declarations used to affirm a statement or strengthen a promise. . . . In covenant-making, ritual oaths attest the fidelity of those entering into the covenant.”¹⁷

Let me give you a few examples of the kind of oaths I’m talking about. In our worship and prayer we use the word *amen*, which in Hebrew means “verily,” “truly,” or “let it be affirmed,” and it is considered a form of oath. When we raise our right hand in approval of those called to Church positions, we are making a silent oath signifying our agreement to sustain those persons in their callings. We all know that the higher priesthood is received through an oath and covenant,¹⁸ and we enter into sacred covenants in temples.

In the ordinance of baptism we covenant to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and to serve Him to the end. When we partake of the sacrament, we reaffirm the covenants we made at the time of our baptism.¹⁹

In our modern society the use of oaths is also recognized. For example, membership in the Boy Scouts is initiated with an oath. The president of the United States is inaugurated with an oath. When I graduated, I was commissioned an officer in the United States Army. With an upraised arm, I entered into an oath to carefully and diligently discharge the duties of an officer in the military. I remember when I was a little boy, when we wished to impress someone that we were telling the truth, we would often say, “Cross my heart, hope to die, if I ever tell a lie.” Perhaps that is even some sort of juvenile oath making.

The scriptures are full of stories that illustrate the seriousness by which people make and keep oaths. Moses taught that covenants entered into by the swearing of an oath would bind a man’s soul.²⁰

Peter’s remorse at thrice denying the Lord during the evening preceding the Crucifixion is better understood when we read that Peter “denied with an oath” that he knew Christ.²¹

Paul taught that the confirming of a promise by the swearing of an oath is “an end of all strife.”²²

Of course you all remember the wonderful story of the people of Ammon who made an oath never to shed blood or take up arms against their brethren.²³

I think the most classic of all stories in the Book of Mormon illustrating the importance and sanctity of oath swearing is the incident between Nephi and Zoram, the servant of Laban. When Zoram discovered the identity of Nephi and realized that his master, Laban, had been slain, Zoram feared for his life and attempted to flee. The scriptures record that Nephi swore an oath to Zoram that “he need not fear” and “that he should be a free man” like Nephi. Zoram took courage and “also made an oath” to Nephi that he would tarry with Lehi and his people from that time forth.

Then comes this remarkable statement of Nephi: “And it came to pass that when Zoram had made an oath unto us, our fears did cease concerning him.”²⁴

What a wonderful statement: “Our fears did cease concerning him.”

The Honor Code you signed when you entered BYU applies not just for the years at BYU but for life. It can become the basis of your lifelong moral standard. Adhering to it allows you to continue to live in a spiritual, religiously based environment where you can rear a family within the protective blanket of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All you do from this point in your career or professional life will reflect on Brigham Young

University and all of us. But, like Nephi, “our fears did cease concerning [you].”

We accept that when you covenanted to live by the Honor Code you truly agreed to adhere to a code of conduct that reflects the ideals of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Brigham Young University. We believe you. We honor you for your past and continuing integrity and willingness to accept and conform to the high ideals of Brigham Young University.

But I remind you that essential to your honor and personal integrity is a *lifelong* commitment to obey the Honor Code. It is a similitude to entering into and keeping many covenants and oaths.

Speaking of covenants, oaths, and commitments, I remind you of the statement of Karl G. Maeser, the first president of Brigham Young University. It related to honor:

*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!*²⁵

4. Your Responsibility to Give Back

The Church has made a significant and expensive investment in each of you. Brigham Young University is designed to provide you with a quality, professional education that will enable you to compete anywhere in the world in the field of your choice. As I said earlier, every aspect of your schooling and training at BYU has been within the context of the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You have been privileged to attend BYU and participate in this unique experience. Unfortunately, many others have not enjoyed this blessing.

What is now expected of you? May I make two suggestions?

First, make your life reflect your unique education. Take responsibility for what you have learned. After giving commandments to Joseph Smith and others, the Lord said, “An account of this stewardship will I require of them in the day of judgment.”²⁶

I believe you share in that obligation as it applies to your education at Brigham Young University. Although some of your stewardship will be reflected in your professional life, most will be reflected in your family and Church experience. Of the hundreds of thousands of persons graduating from universities at this time of year, you have an advantage that most do not have. You have been tutored in gospel principles as you have been educated. Your personal life should reflect those gospel qualities in such a way that wherever you are and in whatever situation you find yourself, your life will be a reflection of the eternal principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the high ideals of Brigham Young University.

Second, take responsibility for what you have been given. The Lord said, “For of him unto whom much is given much is required.”²⁷

In short, where much is given to you, much is required of you.

The Savior earlier announced the same principle in the parable of the talents:

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

*And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*²⁸

You would certainly qualify as among those who have received five talents as compared to those who have received one or two talents.

What will you do with your talents or privileges received through your graduation from Brigham Young University?

The parable continues, explaining that some buried their talent and produced no growth or gain. In response, the Lord took the talent and gave it to another.²⁹ Others doubled or magnified their talent. To them the Lord said: “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”³⁰

Concluding the lesson on stewardship and magnifying one’s opportunities, the Lord said, “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”³¹

You have been given in abundance and will be expected to give back much.

Give back of your time and service as an alumnus of Brigham Young University.

Give back of your financial means when you are in a position to do so, so that other future students can continue to enjoy the benefits you have received, provided in part by the contributions of others.

Give back through your Church service by bearing witness of the truths and beauties of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the message of the Restoration.

Give back a posterity of righteous children and grandchildren reared and tutored in worthy goals and high ideals.

Give back of yourself as an honorable, productive citizen of your community.

Give back love and compassion to your fellowmen, as Christ would do.

In conclusion, I again congratulate you on behalf of the Church Board of Education and the BYU Board of Trustees for your achievement in receiving a diploma from Brigham Young University.

I counsel you to now step into the future without fear and begin to accomplish all of your righteous goals and aspirations.

Be grateful for the education, tutoring, and mentoring you have received at Brigham Young University, truly a world-class institution.

Observe and keep throughout your life the BYU Honor Code. Honor God and He will honor you. When you exhibit honor and integrity, as Nephi said of Zoram of old, our fears cease concerning you.

Give back to the university and to the Church a greater measure of what you have received. Where much is given, much is required. Magnify your talents and return a greater good for the good you have received.

Now the Seventy are called to bear testimony and witness of Jesus Christ. That is where I leave you.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, which prevails throughout this university, is true. Jesus truly is the Christ. The principles of Christian living, taught by our Savior, are the heart and soul of Brigham Young University.

The gospel restored by Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith continues today under the inspired direction and leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley, the chairman of the Church Board of Education and of the board of trustees of this university.

To these truths I offer my solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. English saying inscribed above the fireplace mantelpiece of the Hind’s Head Hotel in Bray-on-Thames, Berkshire, England; see www.southavencoc.org/Articles/Fear.htm; see also www.atborgeas.com/ProsperitytBook.htm.

2. “Come to the Edge,” poem by Christopher Logue written in 1968 for a festival in honor of the 50th anniversary of the death of the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire; in Christopher

- Logue, *Ode to the Dodo: Poems from 1953 to 1978* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), 96.
3. Lev Grossman, "Grow Up? Not So Fast," *Time*, 24 January 2005, 44.
 4. "Grow Up?" *Time*, 24 January 2005, 42.
 5. Ronald Alsop, "And the Winners Are . . . : WSJ Guide to Business Schools: Recruiters' Top Picks," *Wall Street Journal*, 22 September 2004, R3.
 6. *U.S. News and World Report America's Best Colleges, 2005 Edition* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. News and World Report, 2005).
 7. *U.S. News and World Report America's Best Graduate Schools, 2005 Edition* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. News and World Report, 2005), 22.
 8. *U.S. News and World Report America's Best Colleges, 2004 Edition* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. News and World Report, 2003); see "Accounting Specialty Jumps in 2005 U.S. News Ranking," 23 August 2004, <http://marriottschool.byu.edu/news/release.cfm?ID=203>.
 9. "Y. Ballroom Dancers Win Top Honors," *Deseret News*, 20 June 2004, E4.
 10. See <http://byunews.byu.edu/archive04-Jun-nssfellows.aspx>.
 11. *The Best 357 Colleges, 2005 Edition* (New York: Random House/Princeton Review, 2005); see also princetonreview.com.
 12. *Best 117 Law Schools, 2005 Edition* (New York: Random House/Princeton Review, 2004), 55; see also princetonreview.com.
 13. *America's Best Value Colleges, 2006 Edition* (New York: Random House/Princeton Review, 2005), 65, 83–85; see also princetonreview.com.
 14. 1 Samuel 2:26.
 15. 1 Samuel 2:30.
 16. <http://unicomm.byu.edu/about/factfile/honor.aspx>
 17. Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), s.v. "oaths," 3:1020.
 18. See D&C 84:33, 39–40; see also Hebrews 7:20–21, 28.
 19. See D&C 20:37, 77, 79; see also Mosiah 4:15–16; 18:9–10.
 20. See Deuteronomy 29:12–15; see also Numbers 30:2; and Hebrews 7:20–28.
 21. Matthew 26:72; see also Luke 22:61–62.
 22. Hebrews 6:16–17.
 23. See Alma 53:11–15.
 24. 1 Nephi 4:33–37.
 25. In Alma P. Burton, *Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953), 71; emphasis added.
 26. D&C 70:4.
 27. D&C 82:3.
 28. Matthew 25:14–15.
 29. See Matthew 25:28.
 30. Matthew 25:23.
 31. Matthew 25:29.