

Never Give Up!

PAUL H. DUNN

This is always a wonderful sight, my young brothers and sisters, and I am delighted to have this opportunity to come back. I extend my appreciation to Bishop Vern Law for his thoughtful and spiritual invocation. I have had the opportunity many times to travel the world in the sports environment, and I have found that Bishop Law had done this Church and this University proud. I am honored to be here with him and with you.

I always feel comfortable here. You are my friends, and I appreciate that. You ought to know in all sincerity that it does not always exist around the Church, although people mean well. Not long ago I was assigned to a stake conference—and I shall not mention where because an uncle or grandfather of someone here probably presides there. The stake president's home where I was to stay—as we General Authorities normally do on weekends—was a very modest home. The family consisted of seven children and, of course, the two parents; the house had three bedrooms and one bath; then here came a General Authority visitor. In order to make room and a little privacy for the visitor, they evicted three children out of the one bedroom adjacent to the only bath. In the group of three there was

a little seven-year-old boy; he went along with the arrangement, but you could tell that he was not all that excited. He did not say a whole lot on Saturday. Recognizing, with my military training, that it would take a little organization the next morning, I got up extra early and slipped across the hall into the only bath. There standing in the hallway was my little seven-year-old friend. He did not say a word, but just looked at me—then he put his hands on his hips and said, “Boy, I’ll sure be glad when you go.”

I guess we do challenge some people in interesting ways. As I arrived here this morning, I came through one of the corridors and a little sophomore did a double-take when I went by; I guess she did not think we used those lower corridors. Then I heard her whisper to her friend nearby, “He doesn’t look like his picture.” Well, just wait until your children pull out your high school annual—you will

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not be able to help it either. It reminds me of an experience I had some months back when I was recuperating from surgery. I was feeling better, it was my first day back at Church headquarters, my attitude was good and my enthusiasm great. I walked on an elevator, and a lady got on with me; we were all alone. The doors closed and the elevator started to go up. She looked at me, looked harder, and then said, "Oh my goodness!"

I asked, "What's the matter?"

She said, "I thought you were the General Authority that died." You never know how you appear to somebody else.

The other day, when I came down here for another assignment I saw my daughter Kellie, who is a student here; and in great excitement she ran over to me and said, "Dad, you'll be proud of me; I just passed a real hard test."

I said, "That's great honey. I guess you know you get your intelligence from your father."

My wife, who was standing by, said, "That's right Kellie—I still have mine."

I have another friend who has a son here, and he said to his son recently, "Why is it, my boy, that you are always at the bottom of your class?"

The boy answered, "It doesn't make any difference Dad, they teach the same thing at both ends."

President Kimball has given us a remarkable challenge over the years. He has said, in his own delightful way: "Lengthen your stride"—and you have heard that repeated hundreds of times. I smile a little bit when I hear that now, because there is a fellow about my age that works up at the Church office near me, and he is trying to keep himself physically as well as spiritually fit. So every day he slips over to the Deseret Gym and the other day while he was working out by playing handball—and he is a very vigorous competitor—he reached for a ball that bounced out of the court, trying so hard to recover it that he snapped a

hamstring muscle in his right leg. You know that that smarts a little bit.

Grabbing his leg, he hobbled back to the dressing room, showered, and then limped back to Church headquarters in excruciating pain. An elevator arrived, and who but President Kimball should get off? Seeing my friend nursing his limpy leg, he asked, "What's the matter?"

My friend is kind of quick on the draw, and he replied, "President, I just snapped my hamstring muscle trying to lengthen my stride." There is a lot to that.

I am personally proud to know you—who you are and what you represent. You make it very easy for General Authorities around the world because people identify us with you at this great university. That brings great pride to us as a body of Church leaders and to us personally. I commend you on your image, on your stick-to-it-iveness, on your great contribution as a university. We are expecting great things of you. Quite often in my position I have an opportunity to meet with many students; they are often very candid, very frank, very much to the point. They seek counsel and direction in altering their lives. I wonder if in that setting I could just visit with you momentarily—even though there are a number of us here—with three little sermons. They will not be long, but hopefully they will be fitting.

I would like to begin with sermonette number one. Could I suggest, regardless of who you are and what you are, that you reach out—not only to those near you, but to the world. We have in this interesting old globe of ours some very lonesome, worrisome people, even here at Brigham Young University, or at Ricks College. Wherever you go there are lonely people. One of the greatest challenges facing the Church today is the single adult. Did you know that one-third of all Latter-day Saints in the whole Church fall into the category of single adult? And we have many

lonesome people among them, even here at Brigham Young University.

If we Latter-day Saints are not careful, we will have a tendency to be a little cliquish. We do not do that on purpose—that is not part of our scheme—and I would challenge you, of all people, to extend your area of influence. You know what the gospel teaches about your neighbor and about your friends. Reach out to those who are a little less fortunate, who do not fit into the social circle, who sometimes are forgotten.

Let me share a little experience that happened a few years ago. President Oaks mentioned that I had the privilege of teaching in the seminary and institute program at one time; that was a great training ground for me. The particular class involved in this story numbered forty-four. They were excited, early-morning students that used to get up at five in the morning to meet me at six and have class. There was one little girl—let us call her Marlene—who was very lonesome, the typical wallflower that you have seen depicted in many ways. She used to arrive about one or two minutes before the class started, or even a minute or two after, so that she would not have to mix socially. She always used to sit alone close to the back of the class. It was very obvious to me, the teacher, that she could not mix socially. And I pondered. What could be done? It was all right for me to talk to her on a one-to-one basis, but what she was reaching out for was the peer group, and no one seemed to respond. Everybody was caught up in his or her own world—and that is understandable with young people.

One day, while we were studying from the book of John about the miracles of Jesus, it seemed to strike me, in a spiritual way, that miracles were all right in the time of the Savior, but how about now? I also knew that in the class was Gail. Gail was an exciting, refreshing girl who just seemed to attract everybody. Everybody wanted to sit next to Gail. She was the typical extrovert, and yet not too selfish;

but it was obvious that in the size of the group she had not noticed Marlene either.

One day I kept Gail after class for a minute. I said, “Gail, we have been studying about the miracle of Jesus. Would you like to perform a miracle?”

Thinking that maybe she could turn the water to wine or walk on the water, she said, “Oh, that would be wonderful! Let’s do it.”

And I said, “Well, it’s a different kind of a miracle. Would you like to transform a girl who doesn’t belong into somebody that does? Have you noticed Marlene in the back of the class?”

She said, “Yes.”

“Have you noticed that she has no friends?”
“Yes.”

I said, “I’ve checked it out and I find that you are both in the same high school. Would it be too hard at lunchtime to seek her out and include her in your circle? I’ll promise you that if your girlfriends see what you do with her, they’ll take an interest too, because they love and respect you and your popularity.”

She said, “Oh, that would be fun!”

And I said, “Now, extend that to this class every day. I don’t know how you are going to do it, but you find a way to sit next to her. Would you do that? And I’ll watch you very carefully, but I won’t make it obvious.”

The next day at seminary Marlene came about two minutes before the class was to start, and Gail quickly maneuvered herself to the chair next to her. Several of the other girls in the class did a double-take. “What’s she doing that for?” That persisted for the next three or four days, and the other girls began to say, “Well, what’s Marlene got that would attract Gail?” And within two weeks a little wallflower who did not belong, even in the Church, commenced to unfold, and we found a spirit and a talent that was unbelievable. Even her teacher was surprised at the difference. I challenge you, young people, to reach out. If the gospel is really true—and it is—you and I of

all people can help those that somehow do not seem to belong. Would that not seem to you to be consistent in the gospel of Jesus Christ? It certainly does to me.

Sermonette number two: In addition to reaching out, will you reach up? That is very important. Stretch your minds, your imagination; learn, seek, knock, find. You will never again in your whole life have three or four or five years to concentrate on the wisdom of the world quite like you have now. Be alert and smart enough to capitalize on it. I appreciate that for many of us October and November are what I suppose you would call in the vernacular a downer. September is over, and the excitement of a new school year has passed. Your budgets are being stretched, the classes are a little tougher and sometimes not what you thought they ought to be, the winter is approaching (and to some of us raised in warmer climates that is a real challenge). It can be a time, as some of you would say, of the blahs: dull, insipid, long, dark. I think it is easy to blame low moods on the month, the weather, your job, or your last test score. Why do you and I always try to find a scapegoat? This year let us decide, you and me, that the blahs will not take over, that you and I will not be beat by the blahs.

Could I, just as your friend, give you four ways to beat the blahs? I went to school as a university student for twelve years. I understand. I am an authority on the blahs, and it is normal for you to feel this way. First, realize that ups and downs are part of nature's way. You have days when life seems to hum along very merrily. Then you have days when you wonder why you even got up. Everybody does. It would not shake your faith if I were to suggest that even General Authorities get the blahs. And we have to work on ourselves like you do at school sometimes to overcome these negative feelings and attitudes.

Just remember this—and I hope my daughter will not mind a little personal experience.

One day I came home a little earlier than usual, and my wife and she were having a little confrontation in the hall. It had something to do with straightening rooms and doing some other remedial chores. The minute I walked on the scene my wife said, "Your daughter needs help."

I stepped in as the priesthood bearer and started to talk to my daughter, and she snapped back. It was a day of the blahs. She said, "I finally figured out why I was born in this house."

I inquired, "Why were you born in this house?"

She said, "To do your dishes."

So I said very quickly, "Now, hold on before you get too frisky. Let me remind you of a very important principle. I don't know how you and I ended up in this house together—although I'm delighted with the arrangement—but before you came here, and before I came here, you and I sat in a great council and we heard two plans presented. And you voted for the Savior's plan. Don't blame me; you're here because you voted to come. I'm glad with the arrangement, but I ended up being your father. And I'm here to enforce your vote."

Do you know what she said? "Let's put it to another vote."

"We can't; you're here. I already know how you voted. You're telling me by your personal appearance here that you voted for the Savior." That is a marvelous thing to know, is it not? You were sent here to succeed in whatever you were called upon to do, and succeed you will—but occasionally you have to overcome the blahs.

I understand from a bit of reading I was doing recently from Lesley Conger (and think about this, you great university students) that a clam has some kind of inner biological clock so that even if it were transported alive to a laboratory in the prairie it would still know exactly when the tide was coming in on the beach back home. Think about that—a clam. And if it stays on the prairie long enough that inner clock will

gradually adjust itself and the clam will begin responding to the rhythm of what tides there would be if there were tides in the prairie. Amazing. Your body rises and falls on a twenty-four hour cycle. Your stomach contracts roughly ninety to one hundred times every minute. Does it seem so surprising that your emotions also run up and down? They may not be regular, but they are real. And understand that this is a part of the natural process. You are not alone; you are not different. We are all made that way.

The second way to beat the blahs is to put your problems in perspective. Think about this: Put your problems in perspective. The traffic jam—could I be this bold?—the boring class, the argument, the setback that seems so all-important may not really merit your worry and dismay. Your inner harmony and sense of peace is the most important thing in the world. Do not be so willing to give it up.

I like the story that tells of naturalist William Beebe's visits to Theodore Roosevelt's home on occasions.

Often after an evening's talk, the two men would walk over the spreading lawn and look up into the night sky. They would vie with each other to see who could first identify the pale bit of light-mist near the upper left-hand corner of the [heavens], and then either Roosevelt, or Beebe, would recite:

"That is the spiral galaxy. . . . It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is two million five hundred thousand light years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, many larger than our own sun."

Then, after a moment of silence, Theodore Roosevelt would grin and say, "Now, I think we are small enough. Let's go to bed." [Quoted from Wendell Noble, "The Listener's Digest," KABC, November 20, 1959]

You are certainly not small, but your problems are. Keep your problems in a proper perspec-

tive. There is not a student or missionary here that can afford a low mood or mentality.

The third way to beat the blahs is to learn something new. Develop a skill, a hobby. Make a new friend. Reach out, as I suggested earlier. "Curiosity," says editor Frederick Bonfils, "is one of the most permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous mind. There is no hope for the satisfied man"—or woman (quoted by Wendell Noble, "The Listener's Digest," KABC, August 1956). Has your world become boring because you are just too self-satisfied? Find out that you are not really a know-it-all. Expose your ignorance. Learn something new. I challenge you to do that.

I have always liked the wise counsel the magician Merlin gave to King Arthur, remember? When the king was feeling low, he said,

The best thing for being sad . . . is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honor trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then—to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the thing for you. Look at what a lot of things there are to learn—pure science, the only purity there is. You can learn astronomy in a lifetime, natural history in three, literature in six. And then, after you have exhausted a milliard lifetimes in biology and medicine and theocriticism and geography and history and economics—why, you can start to make a cartwheel out of the appropriate wood, or spend fifty years learning to begin to learn to beat your adversary at fencing. After that you can start again on mathematics until it is time to learn to plough. [T. H. White, *The Sword in the Stone*, p. 183]

How little any of us knows, even if we spend every working hour of our lives expanding our own minds! Who can fathom the reaches of the universe? Who understands the instinct of a salmon propelling itself to swim thousands of miles back to its birthplace to spawn? Who comprehends how a fertilized egg divides and differentiates and becomes a human being? Do you know that there is a shrub in the forest that will not germinate—that will grow for hundreds, even thousands of years without producing a seed—until a fire comes to the woods? Did you know that Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his notebook from right to left and backwards to that it could be read only in a mirror?

Do you know that male bees, the drones, were mysteriously pushed out of the beehives early last year on the East Coast, in prediction of a hard winter? Do you know that monarch butterflies have been observed within two hundred miles of the coast of England, although not native to Europe? You live in a world where dogs are colorblind and where the average honeybee has to visit one thousand florets of clover just to fill its honey sack once. If you have the blahs, you need to find out more about this fascinating world in which you live.

The fourth way to beat the blahs involves some reexamination of your life. Let me illustrate with just a little story. One day a young lady was walking across campus and she bumped into one of her favorite professors. He was a surprising little man who would kneel down with his face next to the grass to see the world from a new point of view, or jump out of grand pianos to greet his new students before class. But this day the professor's interest was on the coed. "What's wrong with you?" he said. His eyes were looking at her very closely. "You're not yourself."

"Oh, nothing really," said the girl. "I've just got the blahs."

"I knew it," said the professor, "and I know why. You've worked hard lately but you have

not done one thing all quarter that really matters to you, have you? You haven't done one thing that has made bare your heart. Think about it," he said, and without another word scurried off.

Let me ask you what the professor asked the young coed. Have you done anything lately that really matters to you? Is college life just a mechanical daily routine, or are you searching underneath? You may have been busy—even frantically so—but have any of you been touched in your own soul? Can you say at this point, "Yes, my life has purpose; yes, my life has direction, and it means something to me"? Are you really sure why you are here? I hope so, because you are preparing now to meet the world and its many challenges, to say nothing of a great future that lies ahead.

In this setting, could I just suggest tenderly to you wonderful teachers whom I love and respect: Will you also remember that these students are literally the offspring of God? At the risk of perhaps being misunderstood, let me make an observation. I have been through this educational process a little bit. You and I, professor or teacher, differ from the rest of the world in that we believe that our students are literally the offspring of God. If that is so, then every one of these spirits in this congregation and others like it can go back perfect into God's presence one day. Then can there possibly be a student that is a failure? I worry just a little bit sometimes.

I appreciate that we cannot always control class size, and yet I would challenge each teacher here to find a way to know their students, to reach out in return. I worry a little bit about grading on curves because that suggests that one-fourth of a class cannot make it, and I do not believe that. I believe that every student was meant to succeed. And succeed he or she must, particularly in this great University. And maybe the challenge works both ways. You students can work harder; you know that. And you teachers can in like manner reach out

a little further. I challenge both groups to do so, and in the process you will eliminate the blahs. And that, after all, is a great thing.

Finally, sermonette number three: Reach, young people, a little further. As President Kimball said, "Try a little harder." Do any of you remember—I guess you would not; you are too young and tender and innocent—the old Kaiser-Frazer cars? They go back to my teenage era; that was an interesting time to be alive. If you do not remember those old cars, you have really missed something. I hope that someday you will look them up. Back then they were probably well ahead of their time—at least I thought so. But the car went defunct shortly after it appeared in the showroom floor. Kaiser, one of the gentlemen who helped produce it, was a great American who did much for the benefit and welfare of this country.

Did you know that Henry J. Kaiser, industrialist, failed at seventy-five percent of the things he did? Are you aware of that? As some of you may know, I have often taken as examples for my life people who have had to struggle and yet overcame, and Henry J. Kaiser has always been an industrial hero of mine. Let me quickly give you an accounting of some of the things he did; remember that this man is a seventy-five percent failure in the world.

He built fifteen hundred merchant ships in World War II—I floated on a couple of them. His mills produced over one million tons of steel during the war. And during the same time he produced twenty million pounds of magnesium. He became the world's largest producer of cement. He was the third largest producer of aluminum. He helped build the Hoover and Grand Coulee dams. He had a major role in the San Francisco-Oakland bridge. The list goes on and on. That is not bad for a seventy-five percent failure, is it? I have often thought, "What if people like Henry J. Kaiser, sitting in some distant classroom, had thought, 'I can't do it?'" He had the ability to reach a little further and

his story is now history. He was persistent, and that becomes very important.

Last year, as some of you baseball fans may recall, we almost had another .400 hitter in Rod Carew of the Minnesota Twins; he was there for most of the season and tailed off near the end. Do you know that the last .400 hitter the Major League has produced was Ted Williams in 1941? At the beginning of the final week of that season—and I remember it well because I followed it very carefully—Ted's batting average was over .400, as it had been for several weeks. His manager asked if he wanted to be excused from playing ball the last week in order to protect the .400 average, and Ted replied—and I have always appreciated that great champion—"If I am going to be a .400 hitter, I am going to earn the honor fair and square."

Ted's batting average that last week went down. Then came the final afternoon of play, and Ted's average stood at .399955 on the last day of the season—not quite .400, but the statistics rounded out would show him as a .400 hitter. Sportswriters, baseball fans, and the manager of the team advised him not to play that afternoon. They did not want Ted to take a chance of missing out on becoming the ninth member of that wonderful club. He replied—and I remember it well—"If I'm going to be a .400 hitter, I want more than my toenails on the line."

The baseball park in Philadelphia was jammed. Each time Ted Williams came to bat the huge crowd sat in tense silence, almost afraid to breathe for fear of upsetting him. At each hit he made, the crowd roared its approval. The noise almost rocked Philadelphia when the final game ended and Ted's batting average registered .406. How is that for stretching a little bit further? What a great quality!

Now, you young people, in conclusion, I challenge you again to reach out a little further. You and I can do this by developing that positive mental attitude. Do you recall the experience of Field Marshal Foch of France during World War I? You were not there, but you may

have read about it. He was totally surrounded by one of the great German armies; and then, in the midst of an obvious defeat, the command came down from headquarters: "Take the offensive." He sent back this reply:

"My center is giving way, my right is pushed back, my left is wavering. The situation is excellent; I shall attack."

Or remember Napoleon at Waterloo who was very intrigued upon hearing a Highland bagpiper. He told the piper to play a tune, which he did, to the delight of Napoleon.

"Now play a march." The boy responded.

"Now play retreat."

And the young man replied, "I can't. I don't know how."

And finally, do you remember the story that Bob Richards tells? It is a favorite of mine. He

tells of the time when Winston Churchill was being honored in his final days in a meeting with Parliament. Anybody who was anybody in Great Britain was assembled there and they called upon this magnificent statesman to give his final speech. Winston Churchill's final speech was just seven words long, and I commend it to you. With the gallery quiet and tense and leaning forward in their seats, this great, grand old bulldog of the British Empire—cane between his legs, two hands clasped on the top, jaw protruding, looking at that auspicious crowd—said the first three words of his last sermon. "NEVER GIVE UP!" Then he paused, looked again, and said the last four words. "NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP." God bless us so to do, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.