

# *Acres of Diamonds*

VAUGHN J. FEATHERSTONE

I am very pleased to be with you tonight. When I was invited to accept this assignment, I looked to it as a great honor and one to which hopefully I can contribute something. I do feel very keenly about young people, and I guess these are the thoughts that went through my heart as I thought about this assignment for the past weeks.

Not too long ago a news item came over from Scotland. Apparently, at the funeral of Donald Graham, one of the pallbearers, Blackey McGregor, as he rounded the open grave, fell in and broke his arm. A newspaper reporter covering the incident wanted to put it in the newspaper in a certain way, and so he simply had a little article there that said, "Yesterday at Donald Graham's funeral, Blackey McGregor, one of the pallbearers, slipped into the open grave, fracturing a limb, bringing a gloom over the whole occasion." I hope we won't do that tonight.

I also recall an incident that ties into the subject I'd like to lead into in a minute. The story concerns the fellow who was in a nice big automobile. He pulled up to a red light and waited. Then a Volkswagen pulled in behind him. The light turned green, but the fellow was preoccupied and didn't notice it. So the fellow behind him shouted out the window, "Move the trash can, pilgrim!"

This fellow was just a little incensed at this, and so he got out of his car, walked back to the Volkswagen and said, "I don't take that kind of guff out of nobody." The door opened, and the other fellow started getting out, and he kept getting out and kept getting out, and when he was all the way out he was six feet five inches and 240 pounds.

Then the little fellow said to him, "Isn't there some kind of guff you *do* give that I *can* take?"

Then I also recall the Scotchman who bought his wife an X ray of his chest for their anniversary. He couldn't afford a gift, but he wanted her to know that his heart was in the right place.

In our day we have many things that come into our lives that seem to be great obstacles and great handicaps. Someone who had such an obstacle was a young man by the name of Timmy. Timmy was a moron—at least that's what his teacher told him—so she had him transferred out of her class into a class where they did teach morons. When he got into the

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new class, he said to his teacher, "Well, what is a moron?"

His teacher said, "Well, Timmy, I guess a moron is someone who doesn't know quite as much about something as someone else."

He said, "Oh, I'm in the right place then. I surely don't know as much as all those people in that other class. All year long that teacher told me things I didn't know a thing about." But he also said, "There are a lot of things I do know about. You know, I just love my Dad because we sit around the dinner table, and after we finish eating dinner, Dad will say to me, 'Well, Timmy, what do you think?' Then I can tell my Dad what I think."

And his teacher said, "Well, Timmy, what do you think?"

"Oh, I think about birds all the time," he answered. "I know every bird in the forest. I can name every single one, and there are hundreds of them in the woods around our house. I can spot any bird that flies, and I can tell you what it is, and I can tell you what color it is. All I have to do is hear one note of a song of any bird, and I can tell you what bird it is and finish the song of the bird for you. I can tell you when the eggs are laid, and when they hatch, what color they are, and the different varieties—" He went on and on.

His teacher said, "Well, my goodness, Timmy, you're a genius!"

And he said, "What's a genius?"

"A genius is someone who knows a great deal about one thing."

Timmy said, "You know, I've only been in your class just a little while, and you already know more about me than that other teacher did all year. She doesn't know very much; she must be a moron!" I think that's a great story, and I believe it will lead into what I'm going to tell you tonight.

### **Finding Treasures at Home**

Several years ago, a man by the name of Russell Conwell wrote a great book, *Acres of*

*Diamonds*, taken from his lectures. He tells of being in Baghdad and hiring an old Arab guide. With a camel train they went down the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. As they walked along the banks of these rivers, they saw beautiful white sands and the old Arab guide told story after story, kind of like a modern-day barber. "Finally, instead of acting as if I weren't listening," Conwell said, "I'd act as if I were listening and then just turn him off. I guess he noticed this, because all of a sudden he took his turban off and waved it around to get my attention, but I just ignored him. He kept waving, and pretty soon I succumbed to the temptation and looked over at him. As soon as I did, he started into a story. He said, 'This story I save for my particular friends.' Then he told me this story":

*In ancient Persia there was a man by the name of Ali Hafid who owned orchards, gardens, and fields of grain. Ali Hafid was rich. He was contented because he was wealthy, and he was wealthy because he was contented. One day a Buddhist priest came by Ali Hafid's home, and together they sat by the fire. This Buddhist priest told how the Almighty put his finger in a bank of fog and started whirling it around faster and faster until it burst into a solid mass of flame. And then it went rolling off through the universe. As it did, it went through other fog banks, and the dew settled on the earth, and the crust began to form. As it formed, after it had gone through fog bank after fog bank, some of the inner eruption came forth. The priest said, "This is where we got our mountains and hills and our valleys and our deep gorges. This is the thing that beautified the earth. As the earth's crust cooled, that which cooled most rapidly was granite; less rapidly, copper; then silver, gold, and last of all diamonds." And the priest said to Ali Hafid, "If you had a diamond as big as your thumb, you could buy this whole country. If you had a diamond mine, you could place your children on thrones throughout the world."*

*After the Buddhist priest had left, Ali Hafid went to bed. He was a poor man. He was poor*

because he was discontented, and he was discontented because he felt and feared that he was poor. He didn't sleep all that night, and when the morning came, he arose early and went over to the Buddhist priest's home and said to him, "I must find a diamond mine. Where should I look for one?"

The Buddhist priest, having been awakened early in the morning and not feeling too pleasant, said, "You look for a river between high mountains, and the river will flow on white sands, and there you will find diamonds."

"There isn't any such place."

"There is," replied the priest, "and there are many of them, and you will find them. You will always find diamonds."

Ali Hafid answered, "Then I will go." And he went home and sold his farm and collected the money. Then he left his family with a nearby neighbor and went on this search for diamonds. He started in the Mountains of the Moon, and then he went down into Palestine, and finally over into Europe. Many years later—in wretched poverty, having been driven all the way across Europe, not a penny left, in rags, heartsick, weary, tired—he stood on the bay of Barcelona. As a giant tide came in between the Pillars of Hercules, unable to resist the terrible temptation, he threw himself into the incoming tide and sank beneath the crest—never to rise again in this life.

And then the old Arab stopped telling the story and went back to straighten the pack on the camel's back. Then he came forward and went right on with the next chapter.

The man who bought the farm from Ali Hafid went out to water his camel one day in the little stream that ran through the white sands of the farm. As he did, he saw something glistening in the sand. He reached down into the water and pulled a huge stone out. As he pulled it out, he noticed that it caught all the different hues of the rainbow, so he took it in the house and set it on his mantel. Three or four weeks later, the old Buddhist priest came by, entered the house, and soon spotted this rock on the

mantel. He walked over and said, "Well, that's a diamond! Has Ali Hafid returned?"

"No, Ali Hafid has not returned, and that's not a diamond. It's just a rock that I found out in my stream here."

"That's a diamond! I know diamonds!" the priest replied. So they went out and dug in the sands nearby, and with almost every shovelful of sand, they turned up more diamonds.

The Arab concluded his story by saying that Ali Hafid's farm was the Golconda mine, the richest diamond mine in all the history of the world. If Ali Hafid had stayed home and dug in his own fields, he would have had acres of diamonds.

That's a great story relating to what I would like to talk to you about tonight: the acres of diamonds each of you has as an individual. I had lunch this past Tuesday with a man I admire very much. I have come to love him just because of his story. I had heard about him and admired him for a long time. To have the privilege of having lunch with him was something very exciting to me, and we arranged to have dinner a week from this Friday, so my wife and I are going to have the privilege of spending more time with him and finding out more about him. His name is Douglas Snarr. Have you ever heard of Snarr Advertising Agency? Possibly you have seen many of his billboards. This is Douglas Snarr's business. He told me this story, and I asked him if I could lift part of it because I think it might help you understand the message I have for you.

### **Overcoming Handicaps**

As a young man, Douglas Snarr developed a serious problem with stuttering and stammering. He said that, when he got into high school (I think his junior and senior years), the stuttering became more intense, until finally he withdrew into a shell and would hardly speak in any of his classes. He remembered in particular one summer night when he went up to his

girlfriend's house. She lived on a knoll in a beautiful colonial home. He went to the door and knocked. Her father came to the door and said, "What do you want, young man?"

Douglas explained how he felt at the time: "I tried to say what I wanted, but I couldn't. The words wouldn't come. The perspiration started pouring off my face, and I wanted to say something, but I still couldn't, so I just stood there. All of a sudden Carol came down the spiral staircase in a beautiful dress and said, 'Well, Daddy, that's Douglas Snarr. He's come to take me out tonight.' And with those words she took all the pressure off and alleviated the problem."

Despite his problem, Douglas decided that he had a great talent—a great artistic talent, as some of you here might know—and so he developed a business. After his senior year, he had earned enough money in that business to come to BYU. He came to a class, a very large class, and sat in the middle of the back row, where surely no one would call him to answer questions or do anything. The professor went down the whole list and said, "We'd like to have Douglas Snarr come up and give the opening prayer."

Doug said, "I made my way out and walked down, and I stood in front with my head bowed. I wanted to pray, but the words wouldn't come. I'd have given anything, but they still wouldn't come. Then the pressure got more intense. The perspiration ran down my face. I could feel it under my arms. The pressure was absolutely intense. Finally the professor got up, came over and stood by me, put his arm around me, and said, 'I will give the prayer.' And he gave the prayer. As I made my way back to my seat, no one wanted to look at me because they didn't want to embarrass me. But it was irresistible; they had to look. I felt like a freak. After class this kind professor came to me and said, 'Doug, if you will continue to come to class, I'll make it worth your while. We think we've got something that will

be worthwhile in this class, and I promise you that I'll never call on you again.' The teacher's comment was worse because it made me feel like a spectacle."

Doug wanted to do something about his stuttering, but that just accentuated the problem. He decided he would try to find a speech correction school. He finally found one, and after he had taken a battery of tests, the speech therapist told him, "You have a severe case of stammering and stuttering." I guess the teacher didn't have to be a genius to tell him that. The man who conducted the tests said to him, "We really don't know all that much about stammering and stuttering when the case is as severe as yours. We don't know what we can really do for you, Doug, but I will tell you this: we can teach you how to live with the problem."

Doug described his reaction: "Something welled up inside of me that made me so mad I could hardly stand it. I didn't want to *live with* the problem! I turned to the man and said, 'You're no good!' Then I turned and left. I was heartsick.

"I went through school that year, and then one day when I was sitting in a barber chair, I saw a little ad in the paper about a man back in Chicago who would guarantee speech correction in a course costing one thousand dollars. I went back home that summer and, although there was a girl I was interested in [apparently the same little gal], I didn't go on one date. I worked that whole summer and finally earned enough. I had told my dad I would like to go to this speech school in Chicago. He had had BYU and Utah State University and the University of Utah check it out. They had all told him that the teacher was a quack, and that he really couldn't do anything, and that the course was just a waste of money. So I had decided I would pay for the course myself.

"When I went back East, I found the school, went in, and was met by a seventy-four-year-old, white-haired man. He said, 'Your name

is Douglas Snarr. When I was your age I had a problem very similar to yours. You can overcome the problem and someday you'll speak as I am speaking.' I started to cry because somebody had told me I didn't have to live with the problem I had.

"For the first ten days of that course, we could not say one word. We didn't say anything for ten days. (I should mention that we met in a little shabby room—gray, dull, dingy—and one of the women who taught us was about the same age as the man and was blind.) At the end of the ten days, they taught me to move my arm back and forth slowly while saying, "My name is Doug Snarr.' I want to tell you what that was to be able to speak! I didn't mind moving my arm because I was finally communicating. I was saying something, and it was coming out! We started speaking slowly, but then we picked up pace. I used to go out and sit in the park with a newspaper. There would be drunks and others lying on benches out in the park, but I'd go out and put the newspaper over my arm while reading or talking to myself, with my arm moving back and forth under the paper with every syllable—practicing!

"Then, one Sunday about nine weeks later, I had a regression. I didn't know what to do, so I knelt down. I have prayed most of my life, but this day I really prayed: 'Dear God, help me to know what to do.' Then the message came, so I got up, called a taxi, and went down to the LDS chapel. It was too late; church was out; the building was all locked up. In a little note on the front door, the branch president had left his name and address. I went back to the taxi and told the driver to take me to that address. When I arrived, I rang the doorbell, and a man came to the door with his little girl right behind him. Then I said, 'My-name-is-Doug-Snarr. I've-prayed-and-God-has-sent-me-to-you.'

"The little girl went running to her mother and said, 'Mother, come quick. There's a crazy

man at the door talking to our father.' (I was eighteen at the time.) You can imagine how I felt. Anyway, the branch president invited me in, we talked for a while, and he said, 'Go out and send the taxi away. We will take you home tonight. Tomorrow, you pack your things and come and live with us the whole time you are in Chicago.'

"A short time later, this family took me on a trip down to southern Illinois. I was talking to one of the members of the Church down there, waving my arm but carrying on a regular conversation. The woman I was talking to said, 'You know, Doug, you've got a great story to tell. I think you ought to tell it at church.' Although I said I didn't think I could do it, she continued, 'Do it, Douglas. You come and speak to our people. They need to hear it.' "

Charity is the pure love of Christ, when you don't mind being embarrassed, when all you can think about is the good of the people. And so this sweet fellow said, "All right, I'll speak at your sacrament meeting." The whole night before his talk, Doug hardly slept at all. Then at the meeting he was just as nervous as he could possibly be until they finally called on him to speak. He stood up, put his arm out, and then he put it down. He gave the whole talk without moving his arm. His problem was solved. If you could hear Douglas Snarr talk today, you would find that he speaks about as fast as I do, and I speak very fast. He has an exciting way of speaking, without the slightest trace of a problem.

### **Showing Concern for Others**

Let me tell you just one other thing about Douglas Snarr, because I know that his ability to speak is a miracle. He is very successful, and he's been a pusher—a driver. He just cannot believe that anyone can't succeed if he wants to succeed. All he has to do is make his own rules and then live by them, and he will succeed. Doug was in Washington, D.C., not too long ago, riding in a taxicab. The driver, who was black, pulled in beside a bus. The bus driver

looked down, saw this black driver, and started trying to force him off the road. Doug asked, “What’s going on here?”

The driver answered, “I guess this guy doesn’t like blacks.” The taxi driver slowed down, and the bus went on down the street. When the taxi tried to pass the bus again, the bus driver swerved right over in front of the taxi. Doug said, “I can’t believe this.” Finally both vehicles pulled up to a red light. Doug jumped out of the back seat of the taxi and ran around to the window of the bus. He reached in, grabbed the bus driver, and started pulling him down. The bus driver slammed the window shut on Doug’s arm, and when he pulled it out it was bleeding down his white shirt and his suit. Doug ran around to the door and saw it was locked. Then he stood about six inches in front of the bus. When the light turned green, the driver started inching up until the bus window was right against Doug’s nose. Doug wouldn’t move, so the bus driver stopped. Horns were honking in back, and pretty soon a policeman came over and said, “What’s going on here?”

Doug answered, “This man tried to force that black driver off the road. He tried to cause an accident. He didn’t care; he’s just prejudiced. I want to talk to him.” Finally the bus driver opened the door, and the policeman went in to talk to the driver and the people on the bus. The passengers agreed that the driver had been trying to force the black cabbie off the road. Then the policeman said to the driver, “We will report this to your company and take appropriate action.”

The bus driver started to cry. He said, “I have a family. This is all I’ve done all my life. If I’m fired from this, I don’t know what I’ll do.”

And then big, old, soft-hearted Doug said, “If you’ll go over and apologize to that black driver, it will all be forgotten.” So the bus driver went over and apologized to the black driver and got back in his bus, and it was all forgotten. Then Doug climbed into the back

of the taxi, and the black driver turned around—tears streaming down his cheeks—and said, “That’s the first time in my life that anyone has ever stuck up for me.”

I wanted to tell you that little incident just to give you some background about the kind of man Douglas Snarr is.

Someone said:

*When any man holds ‘twixt hand and chin a violin of mine, he will be glad that Stradivari lived, made violins, and made them of the best. The masters only know whose work is good, and they will choose mine. For while God gives them skill, I give them instruments to play upon, God choosing me to help him. For God could not make Antonio Stradivari’s violins without Antonio.*

Isn’t that great? I really like it.

### **Developing Personal Attractiveness**

What I am trying to do is help you to realize that you have your own acres of diamonds. I don’t care what the problem is. I told some seminary students the other day about an experience I had after getting glasses. I hadn’t worn them all my life, so they changed my appearance a little bit. I was in a store, and one of our neighbors came in—a good LDS gal about our age (young). (As you can see, we’re still going on with having our family. My wife is expecting. It’s great! We’re proud. We’re really excited about it.) Anyway, this little gal came in, looked at me, and said, “Is that you? Is that really you? Vaughn Featherstone, is that you?”

I said, “Yes, why?”

“Well, I thought you had on horn-rimmed glasses and a plastic nose!”

I said, “No, that’s my nose.” And then I said, “I have one advantage over you: I take one breath and it lasts me all day.”

After hearing that story, quite a few of the seminary leaders came up to shake hands. We were talking for just a few minutes with each

one—“Thanks for coming. We appreciated your talk”—and so forth. And then one little gal came up, stood back and looked at me, and said, “You know, you really don’t have a big nose.”

I answered, “You’re a sweetheart.” There are those kinds of people that help others feel as if their idiosyncrasies really aren’t all that much of a problem. I can’t do anything about my nose, and I think if we would look around here we’d find people who think their legs are bigger than they ought to be, or smaller than they ought to be. Maybe their shoulders are slumped instead of squared—I don’t know. Maybe their noses are bigger, or maybe their ears are a little bigger. I think that if we went through this audience every single person would think of something he’d change if he could. Many things can’t be changed, and we have to live with them. It doesn’t matter what the problems are; we can overcome any of them if we just understand that we are creations of God, and each of us is somebody. We’re going someplace, and we can make real contributions to the kingdom as soon as we start looking outside of ourselves instead of thinking only about ourselves and all the problems we have.

I heard a while ago of a contest to find the ugliest girl in America. I think it’s mentioned in Dr. Carlton Maltz’s book *The Power of Self-Image Psychology*. I guess quite a few people sent in snapshots of what they thought were the ugliest girls in America, and there was a big promotion. Finally the judges chose the girl that everybody agreed was the ugliest girl in America. Then they took this girl, after they had the picture of her “before,” and obtained the finest clothes that money could buy for her. They found others who were artists and could see the shape of her face and its contours. Her hair was done appropriately, and they did whatever else it took to make her more attractive. If she needed braces, I guess they did this. Finally they even operated a little bit, did some

plastic surgery, and may have taken a hump out of a place or two. Anyway, when they finally finished, they had a picture. She was absolutely a beautiful person. A few months after the contest, this girl was married, and a short time later she had five children. I think what I’m trying to say is that even if we have problems we can be attractive.

Others can help us be attractive on the surface, and I think it’s important to look attractive. I think we need to keep our teeth sparkling white, and I think we need to groom ourselves so that at least someone will take a second look at us. But the most important thing is the inner beauty that starts to shine forth. It really does come forth when you start serving people. It’s something that bubbles inside and starts moving out. Someone said that when a person is really enthusiastic he gives off measurable wavelengths that leave his body for four or five feet. When I find somebody who isn’t enthusiastic, I try to get within four or five feet of him so some of those wavelengths will carry right on through. I think that’s what happens when someone begins to have an inner beauty. It shines through and makes him beautiful from within and without.

I came across a letter that I thought would interest you. It was found in a baking powder can wired to the handle of an old pump that offered the only hope of drinking water in a very long, seldom-used trail across the Armagosa Desert. This is the letter:

*This pump was all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer into it, and it ought to last for five years. But the washer dries out, and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water—out of the sun and cork end up. There is enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour out about one-fourth and let ’er soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium-fast and pump like crazy! You’ll git water; the well has*

*never run dry. Have faith! When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller.*

*Signed, Desert Pete.*

*P.S. Don't go drinking up the water first. Prime the pump with it, and you'll git all you can hold.*

I guess if you had finally crawled that last few yards and found this pump with the letter, your faith would really be tested. Do you drink the bottle of water you've got in your hand, or do you pour it over the sucker washer to see if maybe this once the well did run dry? I think you're getting the message. You have to have a lot of faith because each of you is someone special. You are a person of worth.

### **Achieving Success**

I have a formula for success that I quote quite often, and some of you might have heard it, but let me, for those few who haven't heard it, go back through it again. It goes like this:

*When you want a thing bad enough to go out and  
fight for it,  
To work day and night for it,  
To give up your peace and your sleep and your time  
for it;  
If only the desire of it makes your aim strong  
enough never to tire of it;  
If life seems all empty and useless without it,  
And all that you dream and you scheme is about it;  
If gladly you'll sweat for it, fret for it, plan for it,  
Pray with all your strength for it;  
If you'll simply go after the thing that you want  
with all your capacity,  
Strength and sagacity; faith, hope, and confidence,  
stern pertinacity;  
If neither poverty nor cold nor famish nor gaunt  
Nor sickness of pain to body or brain can turn you  
away from the aim  
That you want;  
If dogged and grim, you besiege and beset it, you'll  
get it!*

[Author unknown]

Isn't that easy? That's all you have to do if you want to be a success!

I have picked up several quotes of successful men concerning what they think the secrets of achievement are. Thomas Edison said, "Geniuses themselves don't talk about the gift of genius. They talk about hard work and long hours." He also said, "Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." Michelangelo said, "If people knew how hard I work to get my mastery, it wouldn't seem so wonderful at all." And Paderewski said, "A genius? Perhaps, but before I was a genius I was a drudge." Alexander Hamilton said, "All the genius I may have is merely the fruit of labor and thought." Dorothea Brand wrote a whole book, *Wake Up and Live*, to get across one simple formula for success: "Act as though it were impossible to fail." Shouldn't we in God's kingdom act as though it were impossible to fail? There is no reason we need to fail.

I picked up another interesting quote from a fellow who was also a stutterer. His idea kind of wraps up what Doug said about his experience: "You see, I'm a stutterer, and I've spent twenty-five years of my life doing a pretty good job of it. During that time I learned a great many tricks to avoid speaking. I even avoided trying to speak or taking a chance. I was afraid of failure, which could compound itself eventually into total retreat from reality. Failure can be overcome, but a failure can suck the lifeblood from a person's ego and leave him useless to himself, his family, and his company."

The woods are filled with losers, and they have a hundred different excuses why they lose, but I'm not interested in talking to you at all about that today. I think if you'll be a trainer of people, or a teacher, or a philosopher, you need to plant the sweet smell of success in the nostrils of those you would inspire. I think that's a great concept: others must be able to



see some vision out ahead. I could tell you about some great men who have had that kind of impact and influence on my life. We need to remember a great phrase by President Hugh B. Brown: “No matter how dark the night, the dawn is irresistible.” I want to tell you there are times when that gives me a great deal of hope, because the dawn must come. Somebody else said, “Nighttime demands from the overburdened soul the things that daylight denies.”

Isn't there something splendid about light? In the gospel, as we gain a great deal of light, we can then judge good and evil. But as we start doing the things which cause the Spirit to withdraw from us, then we lose our ability to judge. I have heard very intelligent people—people who hold temple recommends, but who have been involved in serious error—say, “Is that really wrong?” There isn't any question about it. It is totally wrong, and I can't imagine that they couldn't see that themselves. But I can understand that the light has withdrawn from them, and it's hard to discern when you don't have that light.

I think you'd be interested in a quote I oftentimes use to tell how I feel about my wife, but I want to use it to make a different point tonight. Would you look at this lovely wife of mine and think about two points? This quote is taken from *Camelot*. You recall the scene where King Arthur finally, after many months, received reports and innuendos and whatever that Lancelot and King Arthur's wife, Guinevere, had had an affair and were having an affair at that time. King Arthur didn't want to believe it, so he kept it submerged and wouldn't believe it. But finally the facts were out, and he knew they were true. He retreated to a lonely room where he did some great mental struggling within himself. Finally he said this (and this is the way I feel about my wife; the other point, about the suffering even kings go through, I will make later):

*Proposition: If I could choose, from every woman who breathes on this earth, the face I would most love, the smile, the touch, the voice, the heart, the laugh, the soul itself, every detail and feature to the smallest strand of hair—they would all be Jenny's.*

*Proposition [and I feel this way about my sons]: If I could choose from every man who breathes on this earth a man for my brother and a man for my son, a man for my friend, they would all be Lance.*

*Yes, I love them. I love them, and they answer me with pain and torment. Be it sin or not sin, they betray me in their hearts, and that's far sin enough. I see it in their eyes and feel it when they speak, and they must pay for it and be punished. I shan't be wounded and not return it in kind. I'm done with feeble hoping. I demand a man's vengeance!*

*Proposition: I'm a king, not a man. And a civilized king. Could it possibly be civilized to destroy what I love? Could it possibly be civilized to love myself above all? What of their pain and their torment? Did they ask for this calamity? Can passion be selected?*

*Is there any doubt of their devotion . . . to me, or to our Table?*

*By God, Excalibur, I shall be a King! This is the time of King Arthur, and we reach for the stars! This is the time of King Arthur, and violence is not strength and compassion is not weakness. We are civilized! Resolved: We shall live through this together, Excalibur: They, you and I! And God have mercy on us all. [Alan Jay Lerner, *Camelot*, 1.11.11–37]*

### Meeting Challenges

Each of us oftentimes thinks: “I have problems. I am nobody.” The competition is so keen here at BYU. You know, there are those few people who just seem to lift right up to the top, above everyone else, and you think, “If only I had their talent. If only I had their skill.” We wouldn't suppose that a king would have problems, but do you suppose that any physical ailment could be near the hurt of having

the one you love most dearly on this earth be unfaithful to you? I'd ten times rather be stripped of all of my limbs than have that happen to me. I believe, you see, that what King Arthur went through was a terrible thing. Every man must be tested. Every man must be tried. President Lee said, "The greatest test we have in this life is the loss of a loved one, and the greatest burden we carry [and I repeat for emphasis], the *greatest* burden we carry, is sin." You may have a problem like that. You may feel like what we talked about earlier, or you may have a physical ailment of some kind that causes you not to be all that you think you ought to be. If you only knew some of the great people of the earth and what they have accomplished. If you could look back and see the obstacles they had, I want to tell you that you would be so grateful to have all that you have. No matter what the problems are—physically, mentally, or in any way—you'd say, "I am grateful, dear God, that I am what I am and that I have all these things." We ought to start looking for the positives in our lives instead of the negatives.

I remember the story of a famous artist who painted a beautiful portrait. He stood in front of it, looked at it for a long time, and then started to weep. A person nearby saw him and asked, "What's the matter? Why are you weeping? Isn't it satisfactory? Aren't you satisfied with it?"

The artist replied, "That is the problem. I am satisfied with it." What the artist had just discovered was that, if he was satisfied with the picture, he didn't know how to improve. He didn't have enough concept, skill, or ability to increase and improve that painting. I think it was Michelangelo, blind and reaching his ninetieth year, who said as he felt a sculpture that someone else had done, "Even at ninety I continue to learn."

I heard President Brown make a statement a long time ago: "If I could choose from all the times in the history of the earth to live, it

would be about fifty years later than I was born." Do you know what that means? It means that those of us who are here were born precisely in the time when President Brown, if he could have chosen, would have chosen to be born. We're here on the earth, and we're going to have the benefit of all those great things that President Brown—as a prophet, seer, and revelator in the First Presidency—could probably see were ahead for us. This is a great life, and it is a marvelous time to live. I don't care whether there are truck strikes or food shortages, or whatever there might be. The Lord has said, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

I am just so excited to live in this day and to be part of the wrapping-up process. I can't tell you what it means to me to be on the Savior's team in this very critical day. I guess, if I had my druthers, I would hope that my family could be spared from all the filth and pornography and all the garbage on the newsstands and the things we see in the movies. They can if they're trained properly and if they have self-discipline. We are all going to be subjected to these things, but we can live the kind of lives that would draw us close to the Savior and help us to be the kind of people we ought to be—once we make the decision to do it.

I would imagine there are many young women here today who are concerned that "I'm twenty-two and I'm not married yet" or "I'm twenty-five and not married." That isn't all that serious. Just keep serving, and in due time things will take place. I wouldn't dare tell you, "I'll teach you how to live with it," because you would say, as Doug Snarr did, "You're no good!" I don't like that answer. No one likes that answer, and I don't think that's the right answer to give. I think the answer is just to bide your time the way you should, and the Lord will do for you that which is best for you. I have absolute confidence in that statement. So I think we ought to stop worrying and being concerned about those things. Then

I think we ought to remember that no one else in all the world is like any of us.

### **Developing Patience**

I guess I could share with you a personal story. I would like to change it just enough so that it won't possibly be recognized, but the facts are true. A bishop from a ward in a distant city came to see me one day and said, "We've got a woman in our ward who would like to be excommunicated."

I said, "All right. What's the problem? Have you talked to her?"

"Yes, we've tried to talk her out of it many times."

"Has the stake president talked to her?"

"Yes."

"What do you recommend?"

He said, "Well, I hate to tell you this, but we told her that, if she would come to see you and talk to you, and if she still wanted to be excommunicated after she had the interview with you, we'd let her be excommunicated."

I answered, "Thanks." Then I got humble inside and said, "Of course I'll see her." We made an appointment, and I want to tell you that I came to that interview with a great deal of prayer and a very humble heart. The woman came in, and I asked, "You are so-and-so?"

And she said, "Yes."

I said, "I have been expecting you."

She responded, "The only reason I am here is that my bishop said if I would come and talk to you I could be excommunicated after the interview. That's the only reason I am here."

I said, "Would you just take a few minutes and explain the story to me?"

Then she told me some of her experiences. "When I was eighteen my mother died, and I had four younger brothers and sisters. I knew I couldn't start dating and getting serious about a fellow, and so I didn't even look. Anything that started developing I just cut off. I took care of the family at home, and when the older of my young brothers was ready to go on a

mission, I supported him. Then my second brother came along, and I supported him on his mission. They came back and eventually found companions and got married. My two sisters got married, and then all the family was raised. I was about thirty and I thought, 'Now I can get married.' A short time later I found the fellow, and we fell in love and got married.

"You know," she continued, "I believed that prayer was a one-way street. You just reported in, but you didn't dare ask for anything. All those years that I took care of and supported my brothers and sisters, I had a health problem. I had a good job, but I had this serious health problem. After I was married, my husband was called to be a seventy. We went to one of the seven presidents of the First Council of the Seventy, and he gave my husband a blessing as he ordained him. Then he said, 'I'd like to give you a blessing also.' I didn't ask for the blessing; he just volunteered it. Then he laid his hands on my head, and he told me something that I didn't know until that day. He opened up a whole new dimension of life because he said, 'Do you know that when you pray you can ask God for things, and he will answer those prayers?' I hadn't known that before. When he finished, I couldn't believe it. I went home, and for the first time in my life I got down on my knees and started asking God for something.

"Then I decided that before I did that I had better be worthy. I was working at a place making more money than my husband, and I started looking at myself and thinking my skirts were a little shorter than they ought to be. So I voluntarily lengthened my skirts. Then I thought that maybe I shouldn't be working. I didn't think the Lord would be pleased with my working, and we really didn't need both incomes, so I stopped working. We lived off my husband's income, and I managed his affairs for him at home. We paid our tithing all those years. At one time the bishop felt impressed to give me a blessing, and he

promised me that I would have a man child, that he would be a priesthood holder, and that he would do a great service for the Church. I didn't ask for the blessing; he volunteered it and gave it to me. So I expected that his promises would take place. We've been married five years, but we have no children.

"Later on a member of the stake presidency gave me a blessing and promised me that my health would be increased, but my health isn't any better. Do you know what it's like to have someone throw a lifebuoy out to you if you're drowning in the middle of the ocean? You swim and swim and finally get there, but when you reach out to take hold of it he pulls it away from you again. You swim and you swim farther, and you finally get there, but he always pulls it away. I don't believe in a God like that. I believe my bishop, and he's a great man, and I believe in the stake presidency and the president of the First Council of the Seventy. I know they are honest and upright men, but I don't believe in a God who would not keep his promises. I want to be excommunicated from the Church."

When I heard this sweet soul tell me that story, I want to tell you I sat there and wept with her. I've never been through that. I've never had the Lord throw out a lifebuoy to me, let me swim toward it, and just as I got there pull it away from me. I haven't been through that kind of a test. As I heard this story, I thought in my heart, "Dear God, please, everything is riding on this interview. Help me to say the right thing today." After she had finished, I said, "You know, I really don't think you want to be excommunicated. You just want God to know that you're really serious. You want to let him know that you just can't take any more, that you've had your limit of pressure."

She replied, "Yes, that's part of it."

Then I said, "But you know, you need to develop a Job-like attitude. Job was a great soul, and he said, 'Though he [God] slay me,

yet will I trust in him' (Job 13:15). If we have that kind of attitude it doesn't matter what we go through, our reward is certain in the next life. You've put a time limit on the Lord. You've been married five years. What if in five years and six months you get pregnant, and then you have this child? What if a short time later your health comes? These things haven't happened, so you expect them now. What if it isn't for five years and nine months? It might be seven years, or fifteen years, or maybe not in this life. But I promise you, as surely as God is in heaven, that those promises made by righteous priesthood bearers will take place in your life. Now you don't want to be excommunicated, do you?" I was teary-eyed.

She answered, "No, I really don't." The tears came a little faster then, and I wanted to say, "Would you like me to give you a blessing?" but I dared not do it.

She asked, "Bishop Featherstone, before I leave, would you please give me a blessing?" And so I gave her a blessing, and she left. I closed the door, went over and sat at the desk, and cried. Everything had hinged on that one interview, and God had been there. Why, at that very instant God had been answering her prayer, but she didn't even know it. He would continue to do so all through her life. You see, the God I worship has a thousand times more compassion than I have. If in my limited way I could see all that she had gone through and feel all that she had suffered enough, God would know much more than I ever could what suffering she should go through, the depth of it, and then at the right time he would not withhold those blessings from her. I hope you feel about that story the way I am trying to convey it to you. I think sometimes you feel as if God had thrown out the lifebuoy and then pulled it away from you. That isn't so. You must simply trust in him as Job did. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

### Trusting in the Lord Despite Hardships

I am going to tell you something I would rather not tell you—something I’ve told just a few people, a select group. I have told it in the temple to the General Authorities one time and a few other places. The reason I tell it in the temple is that the General Authorities can see right into me. Lord Byron Buckingham said, “Make my heart like transparent crystals so that others may look into my heart and see the foulest deed my heart does hold.” When I am in the presence of the Brethren I feel as if they can see inside of me anyway, and so there’s nothing to hide. If I really had my druthers, I’d rather not tell you this, but I am going to tell you. I know this speech is on TV and will be on tape, and I thought about this at the time I prepared what I would say. I’m telling you because I hope that in some small way you will get the message that I’m going to leave with you in this story.

I didn’t have a college education, and I have been embarrassed about it. I’ve tried to compensate for it. Here are all of you wonderful young people at BYU—all getting the thing that I’ve longed for and hungered for. I tried to compensate by buying books, and I have thousands—I don’t know how many books. I’ve got them on all my walls, and I’ve tried to read every one of them to educate myself, because when I was younger I couldn’t go through school—at least I thought I couldn’t. Many of you have it much harder and have attended college. But I haven’t, and so I have been embarrassed.

When I was 19½, I went to the bishop and asked, “Bishop, can I go on a mission?”

He answered, “Well, we’re only taking one per year per ward.” I guess we had fifteen or eighteen boys of mission age, and I couldn’t afford to go. He said, “I just suggest you get married.” So I did, and we have this lovely family.

When I was about seven or eight years old, a friend of mine, Spike Herzog, said to me as I

was coming home from school one day, “Why don’t you come to Primary with me?”

And so I said, “Very good, Spike, I’d like to.” So I went over to Primary with him, and after I had been there a short time, a year or so, I remember noticing a little box the Primary leaders checked off to show whether you were baptized or not. I hadn’t been baptized, and I was nine years old by this time. I didn’t know what baptism was, but I wanted that little box checked off. So I asked if I could be baptized. They said yes, and I was baptized.

During that time (and this is the part I would rather not tell), my dad was an alcoholic, and my mother wasn’t a member of the Church. She has since joined and been through the temple, but then she wasn’t even a member of the Church. I remember that on payday my mother would go over and stand against the mantel and look out the window up the street. She’d look and wait for the bus to come by that would drop Father off. I have seen her stand there from four-thirty to six-thirty, nine-thirty, and ten-thirty at night. She never moved; she just stared out that window waiting for Dad to come. No food in the house, nothing. The family would gather together and say, “Let’s go to bed. We can’t add one featherweight of burden to our mother’s heart.” And so we’d go to bed hungry.

The next morning I would get up, and I couldn’t tell but that she had been up all night. Mother would come to me, hand me a list, and say, “Vaughn, would you take this up to the store? Ask Mr. Parsons, the neighborhood grocer, if we could charge these groceries, and tell him we don’t have any food. Would you please do that?”

I would look up at her, and I’d say, “Mother, why do I always have to go? Can’t you ask one of the other kids? Does it always have to be me?” But when I looked into her face and saw the heavy heart she had, I’d say, “I’ll go.” So I’d take the list, and I’d go out and get our old red wagon with the tires worn

off and the rims worn flat. I would drag that wagon as slow as a human being could possibly walk up the street. I'd get to the store and go in and walk around the aisles trying to avoid Mr. Parsons, who by the way (I didn't know at the time) was a high priest in our ward. Finally I'd walk up to him and hand him this note, and he'd read it: "Dear Mr. Parsons, We don't have any food in the house. Would you mind charging fifty pounds of flour, a bucket of lard, some side pork, and a few things? We promise to pay back every penny when we get some money. Thanks. [Signed] Mrs. Featherstone."

I'd see that great high priest and store owner look at the letter, then look down at me, and tears would come to his eyes. He'd go get a big grocery cart, and then he would push it around the store and fill it up with all those things. He'd make out a charge slip and put it in the wagon, and then I'd drag it home. I've done that more times than I can tell you—embarrassed, bitterly embarrassed, every single time. I give the credit to my mother and older brothers in the family that we paid back every single penny that we ever borrowed from Mr. Parsons and from another grocer that gave us a charge account.

At about that same time we couldn't afford much clothing either. I had a pair of shoes that I'd wear to church. They weren't the best shoes. They had holes in the bottom sole, so I'd cut out pieces of cardboard and slide them in as an insole. When I went to church I would sit with both feet flat on the floor; I didn't want to raise one leg and have someone see "Quaker Oats" across the bottom of my shoe. I'd go off to church that way, and everything was fine until those shoes wore out. Then I didn't know what to do. I remember it was Saturday, and I thought, "I've got to go to church. Over at church I am somebody. They really care about me." I remember thinking that through, and I went to a little box of shoes some neighbors had given us. I went through them, but I could

find only one pair of shoes that would fit me. (This is the part I am embarrassed even to tell you.) They were a pair of women's nurses' shoes. I thought, "How can I wear those? They'll laugh me to scorn over at church." And so I decided I wouldn't wear them, and I wouldn't go to church.

I went through that night, and the next morning—you know how your mind works—I knew I had to go! There was that terrible attraction over at church. I had to go. I decided what to do. I would run over there very early and sit down close to the front before anybody got there. I thought, "I'll put my feet back under the pew so no one can see them, and then I'll wait till everyone leaves. After they're gone I'll come running home half an hour later or something." That was my plan. I dashed over to church half an hour early, and it worked. Nobody was there. I put my feet back under the bench. Pretty soon everyone came in, and then all of a sudden someone announced: "We will now be separated for classes." I had forgotten you had to go to class. I want to tell you I was terrified. The ushers started coming down the aisle, they got to our row, and everybody got up and left. But I just sat there. I couldn't move. I knew I couldn't for fear that someone would see my shoes. But the social pressure was intense. That whole meeting just seemed to stop and wait until I moved, so I had to move. I got up and just followed the class downstairs.

I think I learned the greatest lesson I have ever learned in my life that day. I went downstairs, and the teacher had us sit in a big half-circle. Each of my shoes felt two feet in diameter. I can't tell you how embarrassed I was. I watched, but, do you know, not one of those eight-and nine-year-old children in that class laughed at me. Not one of them looked at me. No one pointed at my shoes. My teacher didn't look. I was looking all the time. I was watching everybody to see if anyone was looking at me. I didn't hear a word of the lesson.

When it was finally over I dashed home, went in the house and thought to myself, "Thank goodness nobody saw them." How ridiculous! Of course they saw those nurses' shoes that I had to wear to church. But they had the fine instinct not to laugh. I guess the Lord knew that I had had all the pressure I could possibly take, that I couldn't take one particle more of pressure. I believe that all of us will find in our lives that some of our obstacles turn into advantages and great blessings.

My father was a great man when he was sober. Later on my mother and father were divorced. A short time after that I went one day to see my sweet mother. It was on the day Merlene and I were married. My older brother was the only one at the wedding from our side of the family. After the marriage, we went out to see my mother. I threw my arms around her and said, "I'd give anything in the world to have had you there with us this morning." She just couldn't make it. But I want to tell you she was there the next time, when the next brother got married. But bless that great champion's heart. She stood by us and was our great

defender in those bitter years. She didn't give up on us; she stuck with us. Can you begin to understand how I feel about her?

What I am saying is that if the Lord will take a scroungy little kid like that, who had to wear nurses' shoes to church and had to go and beg for groceries, and if he will make him a high councilor or a stake president or the second counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, can you believe what he would do for you? Many of you are covenant children. Your parents were married in the temple, and so you are born in the covenant. The rest of you are going to this great institution, BYU, where the greatest learning process in the world can take place. God bless each one of you that you'll feel your sense of worth, that you'll understand who you really are. You are a royal generation. You have a great deal to offer. I don't care what the handicaps are that you think are so severe; you can overcome them. God bless each one of you, I pray from the depths of my soul as I ask a blessing upon you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.