

If I Were You, What Would I Do?

GORDON B. HINCKLEY

My beloved friends, it's a very genuine pleasure and a great opportunity to be with you. It is always stimulating to look into the faces of so many young men and women. I pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I have now lived longer than the biblical three score and ten. To take a line from Psalms (90:9), I have spent my "years as a tale that is told," and, as is common with older people, the tendency is to lecture those who are younger. The fact is that I still feel young, with a love for life, its challenges, and its pleasures.

More than half a century has passed since I was a university student. My life has been rich with challenges and associations. I have wrestled with problems large and small. I have known something of discouragement and on a few occasions have felt the exhilaration of achievement. I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the marvelous and generous blessings of the Lord. Among these is the opportunity to be associated with his great cause and kingdom. A part of that is this tremendous university and this occasion to meet in council with you.

I excuse the deficiencies in this effort of speaking to you this morning by saying that I have been under tremendous pressures. I returned only yesterday from Santiago, Chile, after flying all night. We there dedicated the

new temple. It was a marvelous experience. Prior to that were similar experiences in Atlanta, Samoa, Tonga, and other parts of the world. I think I have spoken to fifteen different congregations in the last ten days, scattered from California to Santiago, Chile, to Detroit, Michigan. Just ahead is the general conference, for which much preparation is needed. I do not have a speech writer. I have only the opportunity to pray and work. When I have concluded today, you may conclude that I should have prayed more and written less.

I bring you the love and the blessing of President Spencer W. Kimball, who as President of the Church came before this student body each fall until he was no longer able to do so. I feel his life epitomizes the virtues of which I am going to speak today.

I will try to put myself in your shoes at your age. I have titled my remarks, "If I were you, what would I do?" If President Holland, who is a man of dignity and a purist in all

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matters of English, never invites me to speak here again, I will understand why, and I think you will also as I mix in a few lines of doggerel, self-composed.

*If I were you, what would I do?
I'd enjoy every day of my stay
On this campus of Brigham Young U.*

What a unique and beautiful place this is! How rich and wonderful are your opportunities! You must realize that you are only a few of the very many young men and women of the Church across the world who would like to attend this great university. As the Church grows, as it surely will, the percentage of those who can come here will constantly diminish. Whether you recognize it or not, you are fortunate indeed to be here. Most of your education will be generously subsidized by all of the tithe-paying members of the Church. You relatively few are the beneficiaries of their contributions.

And so I hope your experiences here will be both challenging and pleasant. You will likely never have a greater opportunity for happiness. Cultivate good friends while you are here. Drink in the beauty of this campus—the sweeping lawns, the trees, the magnificent buildings, the mountains that rise to the east, and the quiet waters of the lake to the west. Be affirmative about your classes, and look upon the demands of your Church responsibilities as opportunities. Be happy with singing and dancing, enjoy football and basketball—yell when you win; cry, if you wish, when you lose.

Experience the fun and the hard work; both are part of the joy of being alive when you are young and healthy, and your chin is high with a smile on your face.

These are golden years. Do you know what *alma mater* means? It means *dear mother*, with all of the best that that connotes. You are here as a much loved part of her family. Enjoy your days, every one of them, and, when you leave

and the years pass with the cadence of the seasons, may you look back with fondness and smiles to happy times on the magnificent campus of your beloved alma mater.

*And so, if I were you, what would I do?
I'd enjoy every day of my stay
On this campus of Brigham Young U.*

*If I were you, what would I do?
I'd drink of the nectar of knowledge,
A great, full draft of its richest brew.*

Do you ever stop to think that in the cumulative learning of this dedicated and gifted faculty, and in the books of the marvelous library of this university, you have available to you the wisdom, the knowledge, the learning of all of the generations of men and women who have gone before you?

Never again in all of your lives will you have an equal opportunity to learn so much in so brief a period of time. The marketplace into which you will go with your skills when you finish here will be fiercely competitive. It will demand of you the very best that you have to give. You are here to learn so that you might go forth to serve. I know that at times it's a grind. I know that it becomes exhausting. I know that it can be terribly frustrating and discouraging. But it also can be so wonderful and so fruitful.

Said Solomon, "With all of thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). As you study, put a hammerlock on those technical details you wrestle so hard to conquer. There is nothing in all the world so satisfying as a task well done. There is no reward so pleasing as that which comes with the mastery of a difficult problem.

What a tremendous blessing it is to be able to study—to sit down with a book, to shut out the world around you, and to concentrate on the ideas that move before you as you read sentences and paragraphs and pages, the

essence of which becomes a part of your ever-growing store of knowledge.

Charles Kettering, the man who did so much to put together General Motors, once said: "The opportunities of man are limited only by his imagination. But so few have imagination that there are 10,000 fiddler to only one composer."

A man who is driven by much pressure said to me the other day, "If only I had time to read a good book." Here you have the time; in fact, the disciplines of your studies demand that you take the time to read one good book after another. There will not again be such an opportunity.

*And so, if I were you, what would I do?
I'd drink of the nectar of knowledge,
A great, full draft of its richest brew.*

*If I were you, what would I do?
I'd walk humbly with God and my Savior, too.*

O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God. [2 Nephi 9:28–29]

So declared Jacob, the son of Nephi, long ago.

And Alma, who had been stricken dumb by an angel because of his wicked arrogance, speaking out of that harsh lesson said to his own son, Helaman:

O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. . . .

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch

over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God. [Alma 37:35, 37]

He concluded by counseling Helaman, "Look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

The Psalmist declared,

But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God. [Psalms 73:28]

The Lord, through revelation in the year 1837, instructed the first of the apostles in this dispensation, giving them a great promise of significance to each of us. Said he:

Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers. [D&C 112:10]

It is your opportunity, yes, it is your responsibility while here, to cultivate a spiritual dimension in your lives as you train your minds in secular matters. Every student in this great and unique university may come to know—in fact, he or she has the obligation to come to know for himself or herself—that God our Eternal Father lives and that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and the Redeemer of mankind.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. [John 17:3]

*And so, if I were you, what would I do?
I'd walk humbly with God and my Savior, too.*

*If I were you, what would I do?
I'd fall in love with a girl named Sue,
Or a boy named Lou,
And plan for the day we'd be married,
We two.*

The names of Sue and Lou are not important, but the idea is. As tens of thousands can testify, some of them now elderly men and women, this is a wonderful place to start the process that leads to eternal marriage. Mating is a process of selection. There are here to choose from, thousands of boys and thousands of girls. Keep yourselves clean from the stain of the world. Keep yourselves neat and attractive and trim. Keep yourselves worthy of the best to be had. You will find none better than those on this campus. Keep yourselves worthy of marriage in the house of the Lord. There is no adequate substitute for it. Let the stars of romance dance in your eyes and fever of love touch your brain. But keep your feet on the ground and discipline your emotions with the knowledge that the God of heaven who loves you invites you to the greatest of blessings for time and all eternity, but that he also exacts a price if they be yours.

Cleanliness is next to godliness. The Psalmist declared, “Truly God is good . . . , even to such as are of a clean heart” (Psalms 73:1).

*And so, if I were you, what would I do?
I'd fall in love with a girl named Sue,
Or a boy named Lou,
And plan for the day we'd be married,
We two.*

*If I were you, what would I do?
I'd live with my love with integrity true—
And welcome our children, many or few.*

We believe in chastity before marriage and in fidelity after marriage.

Under the gospel plan marriage is a companionship, with equality between the partners. We walk side by side with respect, appreciation, and love one for another. There can be nothing of inferiority or superiority between the husband and wife in the plan of the Lord. I am satisfied that our Father in

Heaven loves his daughters as much as he loves his sons, and any man who demeans or belittles his wife affronts her Father in Heaven.

If husbands and wives would only give greater emphasis to the virtues that are to be found in one another and less to the faults, there would be fewer broken hearts, fewer tears, fewer divorces, and much more happiness in the homes of our people.

Marriage is for companionship, and it is also for children. Much has been said on this campus about birth control. I like to think of the positive side of the equation, of the meaning and sanctity of life, of the purpose of this estate in our eternal journey, of the need for the experiences of mortal life under the great plan of God our Father, of the joy that is to be found only where there are children in the home, of the blessings that come of good posterity. When I think of these values and see them taught and observed, then I am willing to leave the question of numbers to the man and the woman and the Lord.

*And so, if I were you, what would I do?
I'd live with my love with integrity true—
And welcome our children, many or few.*

*If I were you, what would I do
If courtship and marriage didn't come through?
I'd fret, but I'd say, "There's no time to stew.
Get busy. Find something important to do."*

It would be a beautiful world if every girl had the privilege of marriage to a good young man whom she could look upon with pride and gladness as her companion in time and eternity, hers alone to love and cherish, to respect and help. What a wonderful world it would be if every young man were married to a wife in the house of the Lord, one at whose side he would stand as protector, provider, husband, and companion.

But it doesn't work out that way in every case. There are some who, for reason

unexplainable, do not have the opportunity of marriage. To you I should like to say a word or two. Don't waste your time and wear out your lives wandering about in the wasteland of self-pity. God has given you talents of one kind or another. God has given you the capacity to serve the needs of others and bless their lives with your kindness and concern. Reach out to someone in need. There are so very many out there.

Add knowledge to knowledge. Refine your mind and skills in a chosen field of discipline. Never in the history of the world have women been afforded such opportunities in the professions, in business, in education, and in all of the honorable vocations of life. Do not feel that because you are single God has forsaken you. I repeat his promise quoted earlier, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."

The world needs you. The Church needs you. So very many people and causes need your strength and wisdom and talents. The time you are spending in this university is a

tremendous investment. It can be planned in such a way as to yield satisfying dividends in the future.

*And so, if I were you, what would I do?
If courtship and marriage didn't come through?
I'd fret, but I'd say, "There's no time to stew.
Get busy. Find something important to do."*

To conclude this mixture of doggerel and scripture and counsel, if I were you, what would I do?

*By now I'd just say, "Good-bye and adieu,"
With a prayer in my heart for each one of you.*

I give you my love as one of your brethren. I thank you as part of a great and marvelous generation. I testify of God, your Father and mine, and of his Only Begotten Son, your Savior and my Redeemer, and invoke upon you as a servant of the Lord every good and choice blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.