

# *Integrity of Heart*

RONALD A. RASBAND

Good morning, my dear brothers and sisters. I am grateful to be here with Sister Rasband and members of my family. I also want to recognize members of the Jon and Karen Huntsman family who are here as my special guests today. I am honored to be here with President Kevin J Worthen and other administrators, faculty, and staff and, most of all, with you, the students of Brigham Young University. When I visit this campus, I am impressed that you are following your dreams of education and opportunity and are living the standards of the Church. The Lord has special plans for you to lead in a world that needs your goodness, your service to others, your educated minds, and your spirituality born of testimonies of Jesus Christ.

## **A Man of Great Integrity**

When I was nearing the end of my college studies in marketing and business at a school to the north, I had an experience that shaped my direction: by divine design, I met Jon Huntsman. He was a giant of a man by every standard—a businessman, philanthropist, Church leader, faithful husband, father of nine, visionary, and loyal, beloved friend of mine. As you may know, Jon passed away recently. In tribute, the First Presidency said of him, “We honor Jon as a cherished husband, father and friend, esteemed as a

leader for his exceptional capacity, commitment, philanthropy and service throughout the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Jon said of himself:

*I made it to where I am today because of a solid faith in God and myself and with the unwavering support of my wife, Karen, and nine children. I made it because I come from good stock, a healthy ancestral mix of preachers and saloonkeepers who provided potent DNA for embracing values and accepting others who may not think the same as you do. This nation provides incredible opportunities, especially for those who are focused, tenacious, and willing to take risks.*<sup>2</sup>

His passing has caused me to reflect on his tremendous influence in my life.

Jon’s story is one of rags to riches. He grew up in Idaho; he was poor. His father was a school teacher. Jon got a scholarship to the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he struggled his first two years, not taking his education seriously. Some of you may be in that pit! When his father suggested he attend a school with an easier curriculum, he realized he was

---

*Ronald A. Rasband, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, delivered this devotional address on March 13, 2018.*

squandering the opportunity he had been given. He spent the next two years seriously studying and significantly surpassing his former performance. He graduated from Wharton with honors.

Later he served in the United States Navy, worked as a special assistant to the president of the United States, and began his professional career at an egg-producing company, where an idea for better packaging launched his multimillion-dollar empire.

Jon built a company from scratch that resulted in 15,000 employees and many plants around the world. He was always running for a plane, meeting with dignitaries and business icons, and looking ahead. In the process he amassed a fortune. He was a billionaire featured regularly in *Forbes* magazine and other forums touting financial wizardry. In his eighty years he left his imprint on business, medical research, hospital care, education, politics, and religion and gave away \$1.5 billion to charitable causes. He was a man of great integrity.

In 1976 I was the elders quorum president in my campus ward, and he was the high council advisor. He was already successful in his plastics business. I even remember him slipping me a personal check for \$1,000 with these simple instructions: “Use this to help those who are in need in your quorum.” They were never to know where the money came from.

After a year of working with him in that ecclesiastical setting, I was surprised one day when he asked me to come to his office. There I was in plush, professional business surroundings—me, the son of a truck driver—when Jon invited me to join his company working in marketing and sales. I was honored. Sister Rasband and I had been praying for meaningful employment after graduation. Like many of you, I had a young family, and we were living on meager funds.

Jon explained that he was not interested in my academic credentials—which were not stellar—but that he had seen my strengths of leadership and character that were a good fit for his business. Those traits he observed were a strong work ethic and an ability to juggle the pressures of family,

education, work, and Church service. I learned that they were his best traits.

I immediately responded that his offer was an answer to prayer and that I would love to join his company after graduation in the spring. My college degree was so important to me, my wife, and my parents.

He smiled and then said, “I need you now.” Next week, he explained, he would be in Troy, Ohio, at one of his packaging plants to negotiate with a major customer. If I wanted the job, I needed to be with him as the new account manager. That was it. The job was next week in Troy, Ohio, or no job at all.

That night, after seeking counsel from loved ones and friends, Sister Rasband and I prayed earnestly for direction. My dear wife, Melanie, was inspired with our answer. “Isn’t this what people go to college for, to find an opportunity like this one?” she asked.

We agreed that it was. The Spirit confirmed our decision, and we took the job in Ohio.

I left the campus of the University of Utah just two semesters short of receiving my degree. Eleven years later I was surprised and humbled again when Jon Huntsman appointed me president of his global corporation, with thousands of employees and billions in revenues—and still without that college degree! I am not recommending any of you skip that last, important step in your education.

### **Be Moral, Ethical, and Honest**

What did I learn from that beginning? I learned that marriage is a partnership and that you and your wife or husband are facing life together. For each of you, your spouse will sometimes get the inspiration for both of you. That is what happened in this launch of my business career. Sister Rasband and I learned early to counsel together. That spiritual aspect of our relationship, and our trust in the Lord, has been our foundation for many years.

I saw that kind of bond between Jon and his wife, Karen. He and I would be somewhere in the world and he would call home, just to check

in with Karen, who was holding things together with their nine children and extended family. She was his partner in every aspect of his life—in family decisions, onstage, in the gospel, and in the community—and that example was not lost on me.

I learned that Jon was a strong, powerful, and fair businessman who lived by clear-cut rules. He could compact two days of work into one. He expected me to work just as hard, get results, and be moral, ethical, and honest. Let me say that again: be moral, ethical, and honest. Such integrity was everything to Jon Huntsman.

A good measure of integrity is found in the thirteenth article of faith: “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men.”<sup>3</sup>

If all the world would live by such standards, how different things would be. We would have fewer sensational news stories; more peace in homes; more respect in business transactions; less rancor in politics; more honor in our dealings with our associates, friends, and neighbors; and more compassion for those in need.

Some would say integrity is an old-fashioned virtue. Certainly it stands in sharp contrast to luminaries whose lives make headlines but whose characters are sullied by devious, selfish, greedy, and lustful behavior. No question, integrity is a much-needed value in the world today.

In the Bible, the Lord selected David—of David and Goliath fame—to care for Israel. The account states, “He chose David . . . and took him from the sheepfolds,” because of “the integrity of his heart.” And David guided the Israelites “by the skilfulness of his hands.”<sup>4</sup>

You are here learning skills that will help you establish traditions in your homes and families, methods in your work, and contributions to society in general. Skill is important, brothers and sisters, but hearts guide hands. Jesus counseled His disciples, “Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.”<sup>5</sup>

I saw that in Jon Huntsman. His heart was not hardened by hardship or sin, wounds of the past,

or imperfect people. Most important, his word was his bond.

Let me give you an example. Back in the 1980s, our young business was struggling. Earnings had plummeted in the recession. Jon decided to sell 40 percent of the company. He found a buyer, and after tough negotiations, the two fixed a price and shook hands on the deal. Six months went by while the necessary papers, contracts, and terms were completed to provide a legally binding arrangement.

During that period the market turned. Our company’s earnings climbed; sales exceeded all previous levels. Wall Street analysts advised that the 40 percent agreed to earlier was now worth five times the original amount, and the lawyers took the position that the oral agreement was not binding, since no papers had been signed.

The buyers, realizing the dramatic growth of the company, expected to pay a much higher price. There was no question that we needed that extra capital as the company expanded.

But Jon was a man of his word, and his handshake was no casual commitment. He informed the buyers of his decision to honor the original agreement and shocked the chemical industry. He would lose millions in the deal, but to him, a deal was a deal. His handshake was his bond.

Not everything Jon touched turned to gold. We had our share of corporate nightmares and company boondoggles. He understood that personal integrity is chiseled into place most often by adversity and challenges. All of us struggle daily with things that do not go as planned, that speak of heartache, disappointment, and failure. We cannot let ourselves be defined by them.

I recall in the 1980s when we were opening a \$30 million chemical plant in the Far East. A government minister invited us to his home for dinner. He took us to see his fleet of nineteen fancy cars, given as gifts by foreign companies. Soon a foreign partner suggested Jon make a yearly kick-back to the minister of \$250,000. Jon responded that he “had no intention of paying even five cents toward what was nothing more than extortion.”<sup>6</sup>

Rather than bow to the minister’s demand, he sold the plant and moved the operation. We lost millions of dollars, but word spread that Huntsman would not succumb to demands for “fees.” Such demands were never made again.

Many of you will be asked in the years ahead to bend the rules, to grease wheels, to look the other way, to compromise. It may not be a million-dollar deal, and some may assume that is the way things are done. But your integrity will be on the line, and the price will never be worth it.

Integrity in business and in spiritual and family matters all draw from the same well of strength—our love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of King David. I mentioned earlier that the Lord chose him because of his integrity. But David was tempted, wanting the wife of one of his officers. He arranged to send the man to the front lines, knowing that he was sending him to his death. What of King David’s integrity then? The Lord withheld from him the blessing of building a temple, giving it instead to his son Solomon.

Everyone is vulnerable unless the decision is made in advance to never compromise principles, come what may.

Brigham Young taught:

*This people must become sanctified in their affections to God and learn to deal honestly, truly and uprightly with one another in every respect, with all the integrity that fills the heart of an angel.*<sup>7</sup>

President Young knew of what he spoke. In Kirtland, several of the Twelve, witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and other leaders met in the temple to plan how to wrest control of the Church from Joseph Smith. It was a time when “the knees of many of the strongest men in the Church faltered.”<sup>8</sup>

Dissatisfied with the financial situation in the Church, they intended to appoint David Whitmer as the president. Brigham Young rose up and in a forcible manner told them that Joseph was a prophet. “They might rail and slander him as much as they pleased, [but] they could not destroy the appointment of the Prophet of God.”<sup>9</sup>

Brigham later wrote, “During this siege of darkness I stood close by Joseph, and, with all the wisdom and power God bestowed upon me, put forth my utmost energies to sustain the servant of God and unite the Quorums of the Church.”<sup>10</sup>

### Where Do You Stand?

Where do you stand today? Can the Lord count on you and your integrity as a true member of His Church? Is President Russell M. Nelson in your prayers and are his words guiding you? Do you believe in latter-day revelation? Remember the admonition of the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>11</sup>

As a church, we are facing challenges to religious freedom and to sacred doctrine determined by God, whose church this is. What of the holy covenants you have made? Do you truly “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places”?<sup>12</sup>

As we see the standards of the world collapsing in every direction, we are often required to stand strong, defend our faith, and uphold the integrity of the gospel. Remember the admonition in Helaman that when you are built “upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God,” the approaching “mighty storm . . . shall have no power over you to drag you down . . . , because of the rock upon which ye are built.”<sup>13</sup>

How would you describe your integrity to the cause of Jesus Christ? The Lord said of Hyrum Smith, the Prophet Joseph’s brother, “And again, verily I say unto you, blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me, saith the Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

I assure you, no accumulation of wealth, recognition, position, or popularity can supplant a heart full of love for the Lord’s ways and God’s children. “Lovest thou me?”<sup>15</sup> the Savior asked His disciples when they had gone “a fishing.”<sup>16</sup>

Peter responded, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

And the Lord said, “Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep.”<sup>17</sup>

Integrity of purpose to the Lord's work is to love as He loved, essentially to feed His sheep with kindness.

When Jesus called from the shore to the disciples, who had returned to fishing, He told them to throw their nets on the right side.<sup>18</sup> So it is with us. We are most successful when we do things the Lord's way, as He has told us. We are here to feed His sheep. You have people who depend on you, who need you, and who will be blessed by your attention. Leave here today recognizing that your morality, your ethics, and your honesty are driven by the way you treat people.

I saw that in Jon Huntsman. He was as much a friend to a homeless man in a soup kitchen as to a dignitary at a state dinner.

Think of the Savior in His last hours. Scourged and nailed to a cross, He could have lashed out in anger, but He did not. His words were: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>19</sup> His kindness and compassion overrode mortal emotion. Again, He is ever our Exemplar.

### Assessing Your Personal Integrity

Assess with me for a minute how you see and exercise integrity:

- Do you choose to "stand . . . in holy places, and be not moved"?<sup>20</sup> What does it mean to you to hold a current temple recommend and to count it a privilege? Do you seek peace and comfort in the temple? Is temple worship of our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, part of who you are?
- Do you pray for promptings to help someone the Lord knows needs assistance? Or is your schedule too busy?
- When you make a mistake, do you deny it or blame someone else? Or do you face the issue and resolve it?
- When friends are maligning someone or being rude, do you step away? Do you take their defense? Or do you join in for the sake of being a part of things?

- How do you keep the Sabbath day holy? How fully do you live the BYU Honor Code? The Word of Wisdom?
- If you served a mission, are you still doing the work of the Lord or have you slipped back into old habits? Are you setting aside time for daily scripture study and morning and evening prayer?
- Do you honor and sustain the president of the Church and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles? How do you speak of, support, and follow their initiatives and teachings?

These are just a few ways you can spot-check your personal integrity. When you leave this sacred school setting, what will you be known for? The time to decide your epitaph is not at the end of your career but at the beginning. Right now. Will you be moral, ethical, and honest?

In Proverbs we read, "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him."<sup>21</sup> Integrity shapes a legacy, a path for others to follow.

I remember standing on the cusp of a professional life. Today you are putting down your foundation of a great work—your life. It is up to you to exercise a sense of duty, a recognition of God's will in your life, and the character best exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ. Be students of the scriptures and you will discern what the Lord has in mind for you. Apply His word and your life will speak of integrity without duplicity of attitudes or actions.

I close with the inspired words of President Russell M. Nelson. Mark these words in your heart that you may always believe and remember them: "Our precious identity deserves our precious integrity! We must guard it as the priceless prize it is."<sup>22</sup>

As we live lives of integrity, we are sanctified and made fit for the kingdom of God. We love the Lord Jesus Christ and His unending example of integrity, righteousness, and exalted purpose. We love our Father in Heaven, whose plan promises eternal life in His holy presence if we are faithful. As an apostle of God, I bear witness of these precious truths. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## Notes

1. First Presidency statement, quoted in Sarah Jane Weaver, “Jon Huntsman Sr. Worked ‘Harder, Longer, Stronger’ for the Church, Family, Business, Philanthropy,” *LDS Church News*, 8 February 2018, [deseretnews.com/article/865695760/Jon-Huntsman-Sr-worked-harder-longer-stronger-for-the-Church-family-business-philanthropy.html](https://www.deseretnews.com/article/865695760/Jon-Huntsman-Sr-worked-harder-longer-stronger-for-the-Church-family-business-philanthropy.html).

2. Jon M. Huntsman Sr., *Barefoot to Billionaire: Reflections on a Life’s Work and a Promise to Cure Cancer* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2014), 9–10; quoted in Lois M. Collins and Dennis Romboy, “Businessman, Philanthropist Jon M. Huntsman Sr. Dies at Age 80,” *Deseret News*, 2 February 2018, [deseretnews.com/article/900009283/businessman-philanthropist-jon-m-huntsman-sr-dies-at-age-80.html](https://www.deseretnews.com/article/900009283/businessman-philanthropist-jon-m-huntsman-sr-dies-at-age-80.html).

3. Articles of Faith 1:13.

4. Psalm 78:70, 72.

5. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28 (Luke 14:27, footnote b).

6. Jon M. Huntsman Sr., *Winners Never Cheat: Even in Difficult Times* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2011), 44; quoted in “Remembering Jon M. Huntsman Sr.: Lessons from a Compassionate Leader,” *Leadership, Knowledge@Wharton*, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, 6 February 2018, [knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article](https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article)

[/remembering-jon-m-huntsman-sr-lessons-compassionate-leader](https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article).

7. Brigham Young, “Sermon,” *Deseret News*, 25 November 1857, 301.

8. Brigham Young, “History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star* 25, no. 31 (1 August 1863): 487; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 317.

9. Brigham Young, “History of Brigham Young,” 487; see also *Teachings of Presidents: Joseph Smith*, 317.

10. Brigham Young, “History of Brigham Young,” 487; see also *Teachings of Presidents: Joseph Smith*, 317.

11. D&C 1:38.

12. Mosiah 18:9.

13. Helaman 5:12.

14. D&C 124:15.

15. John 21:16.

16. John 21:3.

17. John 21:16–17.

18. See John 21:6.

19. Luke 23:34.

20. D&C 87:8.

21. Proverbs 20:7.

22. Russell M. Nelson, “Integrity of Heart,” *Ensign*, August 1995; see Nelson, “Integrity of Heart,” BYU devotional address, 23 February 1993.