

# *I Am More Interested in the Long Hereafter Than in the Brief Present*

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**B**rothers and sisters, I really feel honored this morning at having been invited to occupy this place, but I feel very humble. I greet all of you students, officers, teachers, wonderful missionaries, and visitors in our midst. We are proud of you and of this great institution, which is one of the important arms of this great Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Now, when you were deciding that you wanted to come here to school (and I suppose I am to talk to the students this morning), you, no doubt, studied the catalog issued by the school and found that there are hundreds of subjects in there, so you had to decide which subjects you wanted. After you decided, then you had to work at it, because it wouldn't do you any good if it just stayed in the catalog.

## **The Value of Education**

There is a story told about a young man who enrolled at Oberlin College. When the president showed him what he would have to study, he said, "Isn't there a shorter course?"

The president said, "Oh, yes. It just depends on what you want to make of yourself. When the Lord starts out to make an oak tree he takes a hundred years for it, but if he wants to make a squash, he does it in six

months." Now, I don't suppose any of you want to be squashes.

There was an educator down in Atlanta, Georgia, while I was president of the mission down there. He has talked in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake at educational meetings, and I heard him relate this little story. He said that when he was a boy his father told him it was time for him to decide what he wanted to be in life and what he wanted to make of himself. So he studied the situation and he thought it would be wonderful to be a minister because he thought of the minister in his community and how the people loved him and how much good he did. So he thought he'd like to be a minister. Then he thought of being a doctor, how doctors relieve pain and distress and perform operations and increase the life span of people. And he thought it would be wonderful to be a doctor. Then he thought of being an architect and how wonderful it would be to plan buildings and to know that as they rise to the sky they were the result and product of his

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own brain. So he thought it would be wonderful to be an architect. Then he thought of being a writer and how writers sway the thoughts of men and of their great influence in the world. So he thought it would be wonderful to be a writer. Then he thought of the beautiful ears of corn that his daddy raised on the farm, and how wonderful it would be to be able to make the earth produce like that. So he thought it would be wonderful to be a farmer. And then, being a prayerful man, he got down on his knees and something seemed to say to him, "Why not be a teacher? Your students will preach your sermons for you; your students will perform your operations for you; your students will build your buildings for you; your students will write your books for you; and your students will raise your corn." So he decided that he would be a teacher.

Some years ago, my wife gave me a copy of one of Wiggins's books, called *The Marks of an Educated Man*. She knew that I needed it, and she gave it to me for a birthday present. So I read it. There was a little story in there that intrigued me. It told about a college professor from an agricultural college who went into a farming community to try to induce the boys from the farm to attend the college. In that particular locality, there was a farmer, John, who knew all about farming, and he boo-hooed the idea. He said, "Imagine—going to college to learn how to farm. If you want to learn how to farm, get out on the farm." But his son had the idea that he would like to go to college and sold his mother on the idea, so you know what happened. Well, when the boy came back from college, the father said, "Now you take half of the farm, and I'll take the other half, and we'll see who knows how to farm—the man from the farm or the man from the college."

One morning Father came in and said, "Ma, what are those boxes up in Son's window?"

"Oh," she said, "he's just testing his seed."

"Hmmm, a man who doesn't know seed when he sees it has no business on a farm."

When the crop was gathered in, the father had sixty bushels to the acre, and the boy had ninety bushels to the acre. (I didn't think there was any place they raised that much, but I found it up in Idaho.) The next morning after the count was taken, Father came down the steps all dressed in his best bib and tucker, carrying his little traveling bag. Ma said, "Where are you going, Pa?"

He said, "I'm going to college."

### **The Advantage of Attending BYU**

Now, you decided that a college education could enrich your lives, could help you to appreciate the finer things in life—literature, art, music, and the lives of great men and women—so it is worth something to spend your time in college. But there are some fringe benefits, too, that I don't know whether all of you young folks here at Brigham Young University appreciate; that is, so many of the students from all over this world have found their life's companions here at school. In fact, I understand that President Wilkinson found his wife here, President Oaks found his wife here, and I don't know how many more of the faculty have found their companions here. I travel all over the world, and I stay in the homes of stake presidents. You would be surprised how many of them have met their companions here at this institution. It is worth a lot to this Church to know that our young people meet where they have common interests, thoughts, and beliefs so that they can build happy homes.

I was up in Bountiful last Saturday and Sunday to my conference. In the Sunday morning session they had asked a former stake president (who presided over a stake outside of Utah) to offer the opening prayer. I visited with him and said, "Do you remember when I attended a meeting that you were at when Brigham Young University was trying to promote itself in the various sections of the Church and you told the people in that meeting that you had sent eight children to Brigham

Young University and all eight of them had found their companions there?"

"I remember that," he said. "It's nine now, instead of eight; we had one more to come." Well, those are the fringe benefits you get from attending this college.

### The Catalog of Scriptures

Now, I have another little thought to go with that. You study the catalog and decide what you want to make of yourselves. There's another catalog, issued by our Father in heaven, called the holy scriptures. It is important that we study that catalog to know what we want to make of ourselves for the long journey. I like this little statement by Cicero: "I am more interested in the long hereafter than in the brief present." I like that thinking: "I am more interested in the long hereafter than in the brief present." I think each one of you should be more interested in the long hereafter, and that's one reason why you are here at this church institution.

Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 6:39). And without our knowledge of him as the creator of the heavens and the earth and of his great atoning sacrifice, we would not be able to accomplish the measure of our creation here upon this earth. Then he said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). That's what we find listed in the Lord's catalog, the holy scriptures. Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36–37). It is something to think of giving the whole world, isn't it? Jesus called the gospel "the pearl of great price." He said, "A merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:45–46). That is what a testimony,

a witness, and an understanding of what the Lord's catalog, his holy scriptures, would do for us. They would become the most important things in our lives.

Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). I believe that with all my heart, and I believe that lives and homes that are built upon that principle will never fail.

Jesus said:

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*

*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. [Matthew 6:19–21]*

And so these are some of the things that we read in the Lord's catalog to live by.

A writer by the name of Munger said, "Measure not life by the hopes and enjoyments of this world, but by the preparation it makes for another—looking forward to what you shall be, rather than backward to what you have been."

We're told in the Lord's catalog of scriptures that when this earth was created, the Lord pointed out the new matter and said:

*We will go down . . . and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;*

*And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;*

*And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon, . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever. [Abraham 3:24–26]*

Now, that's just a little longer than three or four years at college, isn't it?

The Savior said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). That’s why we need to know what’s recorded in his catalog, or in his holy scriptures.

Following the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to those who had put Christ to death. He had such power as he proclaimed the life of the Master and his great atoning sacrifice that we are told they were pricked in their hearts and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said unto them:

*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. [Acts 2:38–39]*

That promise has never been rescinded. It’s there in his catalog. All we have to do is abide it, and then we’re entitled to the gift of the Spirit. As he said, “The promise is unto all.” Jesus also said, “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7). “He shall take from the Father and from me and reveal it unto you. All things,” he said, “we could know by the power of the Holy Ghost, and we can know the truth of all things by that power of the Holy Ghost” (see Moroni 10:5).

### **Sow to the Spirit**

Paul said, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7–8). In my position in the Church, I’ve found some who sowed to the flesh. They come in with their troubles and, I tell you, then I wished I had the power to touch the hearts of every boy and girl

in the world to enable them to have enough courage to sow only to the Spirit.

Some years ago I was asked to talk in the state penitentiary. We had a pretty good crowd there; there was nowhere else for them to go. And because of that meeting there was quite a group that came up to visit with me. One was a grandson of one of the Presidents of the Church, one was the grandson of one of the Presiding bishops (not related to me), one had been a ward clerk, one had been a district president in the mission field, and they were there because they had sowed to the flesh. I tell you, my heart went out to them under those conditions. When I was there, I was invited to return again to talk to the Alcoholics Anonymous group. (I made sure I got a round-trip ticket so I could get out once I got in there.) When I came I said, “I’d like to hear from you men. How do you feel? What can you tell me?”

And the man in charge of that group stood up and he said, “I thank God for the privilege of being in this institution.” Can you imagine? That’s what you get when you sow to the flesh. He thanked God for the privilege of being in that state penitentiary. He said, “Before I came here, I was no good to my family, I was no good to my country, I was no good to my church. I was just no good, period. Now, I have hopes that when I get out of here I’ll be worth something to somebody.” That’s what it means to sow to the Spirit.

### **Missionary Work**

One of the great promises of the Lord is in connection with missionary work. (We have some young men here preparing to go into the mission field.) Personally, I wouldn’t want to raise a boy and then not have him go on a mission. I feel this way for his good and because we owe it to the world to share the wonderful truths of the gospel. Nephi of old saw our day. He saw the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He saw the establishment of the Lord’s latter-day kingdom. He saw the Saints

of God gathered upon the face of the whole earth and the power of God resting upon them in great glory. Then he said:

*Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb. [1 Nephi 13:37]*

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings” (Mosiah 15:18). What a promise! How could this work fill the whole earth except for the great missionary program of the Church?

I was interested in a little story that Brother Benson told us the other day. He was back East attending a convention, and he attended a banquet where he sat next to a minister. The minister turned to him and said, “Mr. Benson, I’d like to talk to you after the banquet.” They went to the other end of the banquet hall, and the minister said, “There are two things in your church we would like to copy.”

Brother Benson said, “What are they?”

He said, “The first is your missionary program. You send your missionaries all over the world, they pay their way to their field of labor, they maintain themselves while they’re there, and then, out of the church funds, you pay their fare home if they’ve been good missionaries. Now, we have a missionary fund in our church, and we offer to pay their way to their mission field, maintain them while they’re there and pay their way back, but we can’t get anybody to go.”

I talk to the missionaries in the mission home every Tuesday afternoon. We always have between two and three hundred there. As I see those fine-looking men, I say to myself, “Talk about the miracles of ancient days! This is a miracle every day.” I see them coming from all over the Church. Nobody but God the Eternal Father can put into their hearts the willingness

to serve as they have, and we have over eighteen thousand missionaries in the mission field today. Now President Kimball is asking us to lengthen our stride. He thinks we ought to have double that many, and I think we will in just a very short time because of this call that comes to us from the Lord. You know we sing, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days.” President Grant used to say about that, “Some of the Saints would like to put a P.S. on it: provided the prophet doesn’t ask us to do something we don’t want to do.”

In the early days of the Church, when the brethren joined the Church they would inquire of the Lord what thing they could do that would be most pleasing unto him. The answer would come back that they were to thrust in their sickles and reap because the harvest was white, all ready to be garnered (see D&C 4:4). Then he adds:

*If it be so that you should labor all your days . . . and bring save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!*

*And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me . . . how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me! [D&C 18:15–16]*

Now, I went on my first mission (I have been on four missions) seventy years ago this coming April, and I count the families that I’ve been instrumental in bringing into this Church. I wouldn’t sell them out of the Church for all the money in this world. Talk about the fact that their joy shall be great in the kingdom of my father: by the dozens and the hundreds today, these converts and their children almost worship me because of what I brought to them.

I remember one little story that President Grant used to tell that I’d like to tell you in closing. He told about a Scandinavian couple who came over in the early days of the Church. They hadn’t been taught much about the

gospel, so all they knew was that it was true. The bishop went to this family and taught them the law of tithing. The man paid his tithing. Then the bishop went and taught them about fast offerings. He paid his fast offerings. Then the bishop went to him later to get a donation to help build the meetinghouse. He thought that ought to come out of the tithing, but before the bishop got through with him he paid his donations for the meetinghouse. Then the bishop went to him to get his son to go on a mission, and he said, "That is the straw that breaks the camel's back. We can't spare him. He's our only child."

Then the bishop countered, "Brother, who do you love in this world more than anyone else, outside of your immediate family?"

And he thought a few minutes. Then he said, "I guess I love that young Mormon

missionary who came up to the land of the Midnight Sun and taught me the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Then the bishop countered, "Brother, how would you like somebody to love your boy just like you love that boy?"

He said, "Bishop, you win again. Take him."

Now, God bless you all. Make the best of your lives. Remember—no matter what you get out of this school, and I thank the Lord for the religious training you're getting here—you want to make sure that you prepare for that long journey. To do that, you're going to learn what's in the Lord's catalog, his holy scriptures. With all my heart I pray God to bless you all, and I leave you my blessing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.