

# *Your Fringe Benefits*

LEGRAND RICHARDS

**A**s I stand before this wonderful audience for a few moments to take some of your valuable time, I have no greater desire than to have that beautiful prayer uttered in my behalf by Dean Bateman realized. President Oaks has indicated that this is the first devotional for the season, and therefore many of you are probably here for the first time. I want to bear you my testimony that I don't think there's anywhere in this world you could spend the next few years of your lives to a better advantage. If you take advantage of what you get here, it will change your lives and prepare you, not only to be successful in the battle of life, but also to help build the kingdom of God in the earth. The graduates from this institution are renowned all over the world for the leadership that they are giving.

## **Choose Worthy Companions**

I imagine that when your parents helped you decide to come here they were not only interested in your academic achievements and accomplishments (although President Oaks has pointed out that your first responsibility is to get an education). But your parents wanted you to associate with other young men and women of your own standards, your own faith. This group here today represents some of the

choice young people of the Church from all over the entire world.

Then there are other fringe benefits you get by attending here that will help to change your life. One of them, of course, is that many of you will find your mates here at this school. That isn't what you came for, of course, but that will be one of the natural fringe benefits. I have a friend, a retired stake president, who sent nine children to this great institution, and all nine of them found companions here. That's a record, and I hope you do as well. When I travel throughout the Church holding conferences (I just got home yesterday from Hawaii), I stay in the homes of the stake presidents everywhere. You'd be surprised how many of them have found their companions here at this great University. It has been a marvelous thing, and it increases our appreciation as leaders of the Church for the Saints who provide the means through their faithful tithes and offerings to make the operation of this wonderful University and building of this marvelous

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*LeGrand Richards was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 16 September 1975.*

campus a reality. Their support allows so many of our young people to enjoy the blessings thereof.

I would like to say to the young women that you have to be a little more careful about the men you associate with. This will be one of the most wonderful groups of young men in all the world, but they are not all wonderful, so you have to be careful in the companionship that you seek. A short time ago Sister Richards and I were down in California, and we went to a Relief Society bazaar down there. We met a young lady who is the daughter of one of the families that lived in the stake when I was the stake president there. She had come up to the Y and met a young man who was a member of the Church. She started keeping company with him, and finally he became serious and proposed. But he was not active in the Church, so she said, "I'll never marry a man who doesn't do his duty in the Church and honor his priesthood. I'm going to be able to point to my children and say, 'You follow your father.'" My, I like a girl who has that kind of courage. The young man wasn't willing to pay the price, so their courtship ended right there. In a short time she started keeping company with another young man, and finally their engagement was announced in the newspaper. A friend of this first suitor sent a copy to him in Chicago. When he read it, he called her up all the way to Los Angeles (That was before we had these cheap rates.) and said, "I can't live without you. If you will call off that engagement and give me another chance, I'll do anything and everything you ever ask me to do in the Church." When I met him down there he was a counselor in the bishopric. I mentioned him later to his stake president, "Oh he's now the bishop, and he's the best bishop we have in our stake." A short time ago I met him up here in Salt Lake City out in front of the Hotel Utah and learned he'd just been appointed a member of the stake presidency. Now, that's the kind of woman you ought to be, so you will

help the men to be outstanding and do what they should do.

There isn't anything more important to success in your life than that you be united in spiritual things in your home. Remember what President McKay and our Brethren have said: "No success in life can compensate for failure in the home." If a home is not going to fail, the most important thing is that the husband and the wife are united in spiritual things. Some time back, a young man called one night and said, "Are you Bishop Richards?"

I said, "Yes, sir. I'm still a bishop."

He said, "I'm in trouble."

"What's your trouble?"

"I've been keeping company with a girl for three years, and she heard you preach the other night, and now she won't go out with me anymore."

I said, "Why won't she?"

"Because I'm not active in the Church."

I said, "Good for her! I'm glad to know that there is at least one girl in all Israel who will listen to an old man like me. Now what are you going to do about it?"

He said, "What can I do?"

I said, "Get active in the Church, and then go back and court her."

"How can I?"

"You go back and talk to your bishop, and if he doesn't help you, you come back to me and I will." He's never come back, so I reckon he went to the bishop.

### **Build Your Foundation for the Millennium**

We can do a lot if we will just make sure that we build upon the right kind of foundation, lay the right kind of foundation to build our lives on. I've always liked the little story about when they built that Salt Lake Temple up there. We're told that the foundations are sixteen feet wide, and one day President Brigham Young came and saw the workman throwing in chipped granite. He made them take it out and put in those great granite blocks with this

explanation: "We're building this temple to stand through the Millennium." Now you young people are going to build your homes to stand through the Millennium. That's a long, long time. I'm sure you don't know how long it is.

I have a little pet story to give you something to think about. If my wife were here I wouldn't dare tell you because she doesn't like it. When we'd been married thirty-five years, I said, "Mummy, what do you think we'll be doing in thirty-five million years from today?"

She said, "Where did you get that crazy idea? It makes me tired to think of it."

"Well," I said, "You do believe in eternal life, don't you? In the Book of Mormon we're told that time is measured only to men, that with God there isn't such a thing as time. It's one eternal round. The Prophet Joseph illustrated this point by taking a ring and saying, 'When you cut it, there is a beginning and an end, and as long as you don't cut it there's no beginning and no end.' Now, Mother, if you believe that, you and I will be pretty well acquainted with each other in thirty-five million years from today."

If you just think of that, you can understand what Cicero meant when he said that he was much more interested in the long hereafter than in the brief present. While you are in the brief present is the time to lay the foundation upon which you can build a happy, long hereafter, and this institution will go a long way in helping you to do that.

When I was president of the Southern States Mission, we converted a lovely school-teacher down in Florida. And at the close of one of our conferences she came up to me and said, "President Richards, I'm going to get married. What do you think of that?"

"Oh," I said, "I think it's wonderful. Do I know him?"

"No."

I said, "Is he a member of the Church?"

"No." I didn't dare tell her that she couldn't marry out of the Church down there, because I didn't know where she could find a man *in* the Church except our Mormon elders, and we had hands-off signs hanging all over them.

I said, "You're a beautiful, sweet, clean Mormon girl, and you could never be happy with an unclean man. In your association with him you'll know whether he's clean or not and whether he'd take advantage of you if you'd permit him. He must be a prayerful man because, as wicked as the world is today, I wouldn't trust any man to be true to his wife and children if he doesn't believe that there is a God and that someday he will have to answer to him for his life here upon the earth. Your young man must be willing to let you raise your children in the Church because, knowing as you do that the God of heaven has restored his truth to the earth, you would be a very unhappy woman if you had children and couldn't teach them the gospel. If he measures up, let me know when he joins the Church." I didn't see her for about four months, when we had another conference. Her train was late, and after the meeting she came along the aisle. I could see she was headed for me, so I went down and said, "Name, please?"

"Oh, I'm still Miss So-and-so."

I said, "What became of the marriage?"

"He didn't come up to your specifications." Well, that's the way you should judge, before you get married, that you're laying the right kind of foundation. I told that little story in Alabama a short time after it happened, and at the close of the meeting a seventeen-year-old Mormon girl came up to me. (They marry young down there.) She said, "President Richards, if I'd have heard that story six months ago, I'd be an unmarried woman today." It didn't take that little girl very long to find out that you can't find happiness with an unclean man. These are some of the fringe benefits that you can keep in mind while attending this institution.

**Study the Gospel**

Another benefit of BYU is that it will help you to understand the gospel: why you're here, where you came from, and where you're going. As Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). The whole world is a lot, isn't it? But the soul is what lives on for these thirty-five million years, and so blessings that will give us a preferred place through that long period are the most important things in our lives.

Concerning the gospel in this institution, you study religion in your classes, and even the nonmember study religion in their classes. We welcome them here. We know we have the truth, and we just like to divide it with them. To illustrate what I'm trying to tell you, I had a letter from one of the faculty members down here, and he told me this story. He had had a young man in his class who wasn't a member of the Church, and this young man didn't want to have to study religion. The professor spoke with him and handed him a copy of the missionary book that I wrote called *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. He said, "If you'll read that and give me a book report on it, I'll excuse you from any other study." The professor sent me the letter that this boy had written when he was about halfway through the book. The final result was that he joined the Church, and I had the privilege of performing the marriage ceremony for him and one of our Mormon girls in the Salt Lake Temple.

We have a great message to tell the world. We have to live it, and then we have to tell it, too. If you're interest in history and in geography, just think what you can get out of the Book of Mormon! The Book of Mormon is the most tangible evidence that we have the truth, for no man could have written it at the time that it was written—except the story of the Prophet Joseph be a true story. Just imagine what that book has to tell us about America. Go back to the promises of Jacob and Moses

and Joseph, who was sold into Egypt and who was promised a new land in the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. Nobody in this world, outside of this Church, can tell you where that new land is, and yet Moses, in describing that land, used the word *precious* five times in just four short verses in the bible (see Deuteronomy 33:13–16). He called it a precious land, and we read the history of how Lehi and his people came here and how they were told that it was a land choice above all other lands. This fact is repeated over and over again in the scriptures.

From a historical standpoint, it ought to be worth something to people to know about this land of America or when Columbus discovered it. The knowledge that we get through the Book of Mormon is a knowledge that we can't get any other way in all this world. It not only tells us of the great destiny of this land of America, but it also gives the promises of the Lord through his prophets that it would be a land choice above all other lands and that it would be the land upon which God would build his New Jerusalem in the latter days. It was hidden away from the eyes of the world that it might not be overrun, and the Spirit of the Lord moved upon a man across the great waters to come here. We understand and know that man was Columbus. You see what a marvelous thing it is to have understanding.

While I was president of the Southern States Mission, an article appeared in the newspaper from the Associated Press about a man who came here to the United States from Lima, Peru. His name was William A. Kennedy. I read that article and I included it in the book *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* that I wrote. He came here for the purpose of raising money to establish a school or seminary down in Lima, Peru, to study the early inhabitants of this land of America—the Incan and Mayan civilizations. The article said that he had collected enough money here and, when backed by the small American countries, he'd have thirty

million dollars. The article also said that former President Herbert Hoover had agreed to serve on the board. The promises to this Peruvian man indicated that within ten years that sum would increase to seventy million dollars. I never heard what actually became of that, but I said to myself, when I read that article, "Just think. They are willing to spend sixty or seventy million dollars to learn something about the past history of this great land of America. After they've spent that amount of money they will never know even one-hundredth part as much as they could know if they'd read the Book of Mormon. They may find a few hieroglyphics, pots and pans, and so forth, but they will never know what the God of heaven had in mind when he led the descendants of Joseph here to this land." You see, it's a historical thing. Also from a geographical standpoint we know the history of this great land of America as no other people in all the world know it. That's only one of the great contributions of this book that you learn about here in your school-work.

### **Know that Joseph Smith Is a Prophet**

We have truth revealed that no other people in all the world have. Just think of the vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He didn't know which church to join. That was a reasonable condition, and he read these words in the scriptures: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5). He went out into the woods and prayed, and a light did appear from heaven brighter than the noonday sun. In the midst of that light were the Father and the Son. The Father pointed to the Son and said, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith 2:17). No event has transpired in this world, since the resurrection of the Savior, that can compare to that. Why didn't it happen five hundred years ago? Because the Lord hadn't prepared this land for the restoration of the gospel. That boy Joseph Smith was in waiting for many, many years.

If you read and study the scriptures you learn that prophets were ordained prophets even before they came into the world. You remember that Jeremiah, when he was called to be a prophet, couldn't understand it. The Lord said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). In that same sense Joseph Smith was ordained long before he came upon this earth. When you read in the Book of Mormon, you read the account of Lehi in the desert. He told his son Joseph about how the Lord had promised Joseph who was sold into Egypt that in the latter days he would raise up a prophet from his loins like unto Moses (see 2 Nephi 3). We read in the Bible that there was no prophet in Israel like unto Moses because he talked with God face to face (see Deuteronomy 34:10). But that's the kind of prophet he would raise up in the latter days from the loins of Joseph. Obviously that prophet was the Prophet Joseph Smith. That promise, you see, was made to Joseph over three thousand years ago.

The Lord had Joseph Smith in waiting for this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Lehi said that he would bring forth the word of the Lord. He brought us the Book of Mormon, he brought us the Doctrine and Covenants, and he brought us the Pearl of Great Price and many other wonderful writings. He has given us more revealed truth than any other prophet who has lived upon the face of the earth as far as the history and the records show us. The Lord said, "Unto him will I give power to bring forth my word—and not to the bringing forth my word only, . . . but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them" (see 2 Nephi 3:11). What did he mean by that? He would give them to understand the Bible in the spirit in which it was written.

Do you realize that in this nation there are 697 different churches—just in America?

(I checked over a year ago.) We have this many just because men couldn't agree in their interpretation of the Bible and were dependent upon their own wisdom. And so the Lord said that this prophet should not only bring forth his word but would bring men to a conviction of his word that had already gone forth among them. He said that he would bring men unto salvation, because he would be the recipient of the restoration of the holy priesthood, the power to administer the saving ordinances of the gospel. Then the Lord says: "and he shall be great in mine eyes" (2 Nephi 3:8). Whatever the world may think of the prophet of this dispensation, here is the word of the Lord—"He shall be great in mine eyes."

To illustrate what he meant when he said, "and not to the bringing forth my word only, . . . but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them," I'd like to tell you a little experience I had when I was on a mission over in Holland. I was invited to talk to a Bible class of businessmen in The Hague. We met in the home of a prominent furniture dealer. There were about twenty men; the only woman there was the daughter of the man of the house. Each had his Bible, and they gave me an hour and a half to discuss universal salvation, which includes our work for the dead. I just gave them chapter and verse and an explanation and let them look it up in their own Bibles and read it. People believe it more readily when they read it themselves. Then when I was through I closed my Bible, laid it on the table, folded my arms, and waited for a comment. The first comment came from the daughter of the man of the house. She said, "Father, I just can't understand it. I've never attended one of these Bible classes in my life that you haven't had the last word to say on everything, but tonight you haven't said a word!"

He said, "My daughter, there isn't anything to say. This man has been teaching us things we've never heard of and has been teaching

them to us out of our own Bibles." That's what the Lord meant when he said that the Prophet of this dispensation should not only bring forth his word but would bring men to conviction of his word that had already gone forth among them. I could tell you many more stories like that.

### **Bear Witness of Gospel Truths**

A few years ago two of our American churches on the West Coast were holding a convention in Salt Lake City. The people came from California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada and represented the Congregational and Evangelical churches. The leader of that group wrote a letter to President McKay and asked if he would send one of the General Authorities to talk for two hours in the morning session of their convention to tell them the story of Mormonism, then to remain as their guest for lunch, and then to stay an hour and a half in the afternoon for questions. Well, I got the assignment, and I don't mind telling you I was glad to get it. I always tell our missionaries you never need to argue with anybody—"If you learn how to tell our story, you tell them things they've never heard of, and prove them out of their on Bibles." When I arrived at the meeting, I asked, "Now, do you want it just the way we believe it, how we got the church and what we believe?"

The man in charge said, "That's just what we want." Some of them had to get away on earlier planes, so they moved the luncheon back half an hour and gave me two hours and a half in that morning session. I just gave them chapter and verse and showed them what we received through the restoration of the gospel. You remember the words of Peter when he said the heavens were to receive the Christ until the restitution of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began (see Acts 3:20–21). A restitution is *not* a reformation, which is how all these other churches have come into existence. They have tried to

correct the mistakes of history, but we have a restitution of all things. I showed what we got by the coming of the different holy prophets, as Peter said, and when I was through, I had only one question out of all those ministers and church leaders. You might be interested in that question. The man in charge said, "Now, Mr. Richards, you've told us that you believe that God is a personal god."

I said, "That's right."

He said, "We've heard it said that you believe that God has a wife. Would you explain that to us?"

I think he thought he had me in a corner and that I couldn't do it. So rather facetiously I said, "Well, I don't see how in the world he could have a Son without a wife, do you?" They all began to titter, and I didn't have any more trouble with that question.

Since it will be time to close in a few minutes, I will add one more thought. When I go to conferences, at the close of the conference the Saints always bring up their nonmember friends and introduce them to me. I say this: "You know what I always say to the nonmembers who honor us with their presence?"

"What's that, Mr. Richards?"

"There are only two kinds of people in this world—those who are in the true church and those who ought to be. Get your boots on; we don't want to wait too long for you. We'll get you sooner or later. You don't know that, but we do, and it had just as well be sooner as later." You know, I've had letters come back from all over the world telling me they got

their boots on. I walked up to the United Airlines counter in Chicago about a year and a half ago, and the young man in back of the counter looked at me and said, "Aren't you LeGrand Richards? I'm one of those guys you told to get my boots on. I've joined the Church and I'm going out to the Y next fall." Last general conference a woman came in from California. She'd made me a pretty little figurine with two boots and a little motto in the middle—"Get your boots on!"—to put on my desk. Just the other day I received a letter from a young man dated August 24. Now that's not very long ago. About a year ago I entertained a young group from the Y in my office, and I showed them through the Church Administration Building. As I did, I said, "I'm sure you're all Mormons. If you're not, you ought to be." In this letter this young man wrote me back and said, "I was the only 'ought to be' in that group you showed around, and I just wanted to tell you I've joined the Church." I say there isn't an honest man or an honest woman in this world who really loves the Lord and would take the time to study it in a spirit of prayer who wouldn't join this Church.

Now, God bless you and keep you young people within the hollow of his hands from all the wickedness of the world and the false philosophies of men. I pray that you may learn what life really is for and that you'll be mighty instruments in his hands in helping to establish his kingdom. I leave my love and blessing with each one of you in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.