

“Be Thou an Example”

SHARON G. SAMUELSON

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a privilege to be able to speak to you today as we begin a new semester as well as a new year.

It was almost 10 months ago that I stood at this pulpit expressing to you my feelings of being humble and grateful in anticipation of the new assignment my husband had just received. The months since that March day have passed quickly, and today I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you publicly for the kindness and welcoming spirit that my husband, family, and I have received from you—the faculty, staff, administration, and, especially, the students of Brigham Young University.

It has been a great delight to become part of this university family, and, as you can imagine, it has brought many changes into our lives. We have moved to Provo; purchased blue wardrobes; learned that buildings on campus are identified by initials such as HFAC, WSC, MOA, and HBLL; hugged Cosmo; eaten the delicious ice cream from the Creamery—and the list could go on. Most important, however, we have made many new friends and our lives have been enriched by these associations as well as by the spirit that radiates from you, the students, with the successes you have in the academic, spiritual, social, and other worthwhile aspects of your lives.

You have greatly impressed me in so many different ways; therefore, may I commend you for the wonderful examples you are and can be to those with whom you associate as well as those who view and see you in word and action whether near or from afar. Elder Neal A. Maxwell says it well in this statement: “We can be walking witnesses and standing sermons to which objective onlookers can say a quiet amen” (“The Net Gathers of Every Kind,” *Ensign*, November 1980, 15).

I truly believe the words of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who so often reiterates that throughout the Church your generation has been chosen by our Heavenly Father to come to earth at this time. You have missions to perform that will bless your lives as well as those of your families, descendants, the Church, and the world. To all of us, you exemplify the scripture found in 1 Timothy 4:12: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” The majority of people in the world today cannot or will not understand

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or comprehend that young people will choose to exemplify conduct that is in keeping with what is admonished by this scripture as well as what is taught by those who lead and love you.

I have the opportunity often to view you in action as I walk around this campus. I become more and more convinced of your goodness, faith, love, and exemplary lives. You are happy, cheerful, friendly, and usually smiling. I see you studying from not only your textbooks but also the scriptures. I view you serving others, whether it be showing courtesy in your employment or expressing your pure love of Christ in charity. I see you letting your light shine by sharing your talents and skills with others. You spend hours perfecting these and giving others joy by your accomplishments. I see you overcoming disappointments, challenges, and mistakes with renewed enthusiasm and faith in yourselves. I also know of the gratitude you have for the opportunity you have to be at Brigham Young University. You appreciate the service and sacrifices of so many that have enabled you to participate in what is available to all who attend here. You should never forget, however, that, as is stated in Doctrine and Covenants 18:38, “And by their desires and their works you shall know them.” Always in the sight of the world around you, you will be judged accordingly.

The Lord has given us standards to live by and to guide each one of us. President Hinckley has stated:

While standards generally may totter, we of the Church are without excuse if we drift in the same manner. We have standards—sure, tested, and effective. To the extent that we observe them, we shall go forward. To the extent that we neglect them, we shall hinder our own progress and bring embarrassment to the work of the Lord. These standards have come from him. Some of them may appear a little out of date in our society, but

this does not detract from their validity nor diminish the virtue of their application. The subtle reasoning of men, no matter how clever, no matter how plausible it may sound, cannot abridge the declared wisdom of God. [Gordon B. Hinckley, CR, April 1970, 21; “Contend Not with Others, But Pursue a Steady Course,” *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 40; also, *Be Thou An Example* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 12]

You are so blessed to be attending this university and gaining a wonderful education in both the academic and spiritual areas of your lives. Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and past president of this university, said at his inauguration:

Our reason for being [meaning BYU] is to be a university. But our reason for being a university is to encourage and prepare young men and women to rise to their full spiritual potential as sons and daughters of God. We seek to prepare them to live and serve in the world, but we encourage them not to be of the world. [“Inaugural Response,” 12 November 1971, 18; emphasis in original]

As each of you strives to achieve success and growth both academically and spiritually during your years here and as you live the teachings of our Heavenly Father, you have the greatest example to follow. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, and His life and teachings are for all of us to emulate. He knows our inner hearts and delights in our joys and righteous endeavors. He suffers with us during our trials, temptations, shortcomings, and failures. He is always there with an open heart and an abundance of love. May each of you know of my testimony of Him and my love and caring for each one of you. I feel it a privilege to be in your midst and thank my Heavenly Father for this blessing in my life at this time. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.