

“Act Well Thy Part”

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Good morning! It is indeed a privilege to stand before this assembly and welcome each of you back on campus to begin the 2010 school year. My heart is full of gratitude for the opportunity I have to associate with such an amazing group of young men and women here at Brigham Young University.

Each of you is representative of a generation of young men and women who in the near future will go out into the world and do great and marvelous things—some within the public scrutiny and some more private and personal. You will eventually be found throughout the world because, indeed, the world will be your campus. Without being aware of it, that well-known author Dr. Seuss described you when he wrote:

OH!
THE PLACES YOU’LL GO!

You’ll be on your way up!
You’ll be seeing great sights!
You’ll join the high fliers
who soar to high heights.

...

Wherever you fly, you’ll be best of the best.

And he was right when he said:

You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself
any direction you choose.

[Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* (New York: Random House, 1990), 11–12, 15; 2]

There is a scripture found in Revelation 3:8 that reads: “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”

The Lord has promised each one of you that He will open doors for you to enter and that He will be a beacon of light for you to follow if you but serve Him. He will make available opportunities and experiences that can help you be successful in both the spiritual and temporal areas of your life. When you seek and listen

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to the Spirit and follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, many blessings will be forthcoming. Prospects for expanding your horizons and for encountering many of life's experiences are boundless if you enter the doors that the Lord provides for you commensurate with your faith. In fact, He has said that these doors cannot be shut by man, but you can close them yourself if you shut Him out of your life.

At the present time you are students studying to achieve important goals in your lives. You desire to gain an education that will enable you to be successful in future professional and personal endeavors. In the months and years ahead you will be entering doors that will lead you to places and opportunities you may not be able to imagine at the present time. As you make your way on the pathways of life, there will be many of these doors available to you.

There will be times in your future when the door you enter may take you on a road strewn with pain, heartache, and suffering, and you would choose not to take that path if that choice were possible. Individual struggles, however, are necessary for your eternal progression. These trials test your faith, endurance, and submission to the will of the Lord and are part of God's plan for you.

Also, it is essential that you always recognize and acknowledge the source of all the blessings you receive and that you act accordingly. In 1 Timothy 4:12 you as a youthful generation are admonished to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

When was the last time you read or recited the thirteen Articles of Faith? All but one of them begins with the words "We believe." Therefore it certainly would be a good reminder to you of what we as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints profess to believe if you would review the Articles of Faith. You live in a world where economic, political, and social conditions can be extremely dark and depressing without the

hope and knowledge of Christ's mission and message. To this world and its people you are needed to be an example in all you do of the beliefs stated in this body of scripture.

Those who observe your lifestyle and behavior learn a great deal about your character, faith, and values. They can be inspired by your example if you follow the teachings of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is possible, however, for the opposite to occur if your words and actions are not consistent with the principles and teachings of the gospel.

President David O. McKay was the president of the Church during my high school and college years. Just as Presidents Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson will be the leaders you will recall as influencing you during those same tender years in your lives, President McKay is the one I admired, loved, and strived to heed the counsel of.

When I periodically enter the Missionary Training Center in Provo, I am reminded of him when I view the replica of a stone that is on display in the main entrance. The inscription on the stone influenced President McKay throughout his whole life. The message came at a time when President McKay was very discouraged and downhearted while serving his first mission in Scotland. He had just received a rebuke from a Scottish woman to whom he had presented a tract. The prejudice and misconceptions he felt the people had toward him and the Church hurt him very deeply. As he departed from the Scottish town of Stirling after touring its historic castle on that same day, he had the following life-altering experience:

As we were coming back into town, I saw on my right an unfinished dwelling, over the front door of which there was some carving. That was most unusual, so I said to Elder Johnston, "I'm going to see what that is." I was halfway up the graveled walk when there came to my eyesight a striking motto, carved in stone: "Whate'er thou art, act

well thy part.” I repeated it to Elder Johnston as we walked into town to find a place for our lodgings before we began our work. We walked quietly, but I said to myself, or the Spirit within me whispered, “You are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. More than that, you are a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. You accepted the responsibility as a representative of the Church.” . . .

. . . I accepted the message given to me on that stone, and from that moment we tried to do our part as missionaries in Scotland. [David O. McKay, “My Young Friends . . .” President McKay Speaks to Youth, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 39; see also “Pres. McKay Speaks to Pioneer Stake Youth,” Church News, 21 September 1957, 4]

President McKay spoke often of this experience and of how powerful and influential the message on the stone was to him and how it became an important guideline throughout his life. In fact, in his biography of President McKay, Francis Gibbons stated:

There can be no doubt that this experience, which planted the motto in his mind under such unusual circumstances, was one of the major factors in the growth and development of David O. McKay. [Francis M. Gibbons, David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 46]

President David O. McKay, of course, also reiterated that the message applied to “moral and lawful endeavors, and not to harmful or villainous actions” (McKay, *CR*, October 1954, 83; also McKay, “Whate’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part,” *Improvement Era*, October 1959, 726; reprinted in McKay, *What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part: The Missionary Diaries of David O. McKay*, eds. Stan Larson and Patricia Larson [Salt Lake City: Blue Ribbon Books, 1999], 274). Today it remains a reminder to us of the scripture found in Mosiah 18:9 in which we are

admonished “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”

As my husband and I were raising our family, we jokingly—but very seriously—would say to our children periodically as they left the house for various reasons, “Remember who you are and what you represent.” We were reminding each that they were a son or daughter of Heavenly Father and that their behavior in every word and action was representative of their family, church, and God.

At present you have different roles in your lives. These roles often change from day to day or even from hour to hour. As mentioned previously, each of you is a student at Brigham Young University who is striving to be successful in every aspect of that role. Hopefully you will periodically recall the motto of President McKay and remember to “act well thy part” in your day-to-day activities.

You can be found learning in the classrooms, studying in the library or cafeterias, walking on campus, working at jobs on or off campus, attending sporting events in different venues on this campus or away, driving motorized vehicles, socializing with friends and classmates, or attending your church meetings. I could, of course, continue with a more extensive list. As a student here we hope you understand and are an example of the motto “Whate’er thou art, act well thy part.”

The Lord has opened a door for you to attend BYU with its attendant blessings, challenges, expectations, and experiences. At the doorway to this campus you are reminded to “Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve.” He would have each of you remember who you are and how much He loves you as one of His spiritual sons or daughters. He would have you serve your fellow men—benefiting them and making this world better for your having lived in it.

You will continue to take on new roles as you leave campus life. You will find yourselves having different roles in your families. You will serve in many different capacities and

assignments in the Church. You will be leaders as well as followers. In the workplace and at home you will create, teach, learn, serve, and so forth. You will have vitally important roles in your community, family, and church. Throughout your life you will have opportunities each day to be reminded of the admonition that was followed by a prophet of the Lord: “Whate’er thou art, act well thy part.”

I have a testimony that the Lord lives and that we will be blessed as we enter the righteous doors He will provide if we but serve Him. I am thankful for a prophet—President Thomas S. Monson—to guide, teach, and counsel us. May we all be examples of the believers and act well our part is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.