

# *To Establish a Secure Foundation for Life*

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I rejoice in the singular privilege of being on this remarkable Brigham Young University campus with each of you. This entire center is charged with an ennobling spirit that originates from your individual purity and righteousness. With great depth of feeling I express my love for each of you and my profound gratitude for who you are and what you will accomplish in your lifetime.

During the past several years, my life has been powerfully enriched by an assignment that has permitted close collaboration with President Cecil Samuelson and key BYU faculty and administrative staff. Simultaneously, I have had the privilege of meeting the student-body leaders at Brigham Young University and some of the outstanding students enrolled here. These experiences have created in me a deep and abiding respect for this unique university and its precious student body. That respect and appreciation has motivated me to strive to prepare a message that I hope will be of lasting value to you personally.

I will speak as though I am conversing with each one of you individually. You may be just beginning your studies at this university. If so, you might feel intimidated by many around you who seem to be well oriented and accomplishing much of great worth, while you may

not be sure of how to make the most of your opportunity here. Or you could be a confident student about ready to graduate, having worked hard to benefit from the knowledge and experience available at this unique campus. Perhaps you find yourself somewhere between these two extremes. My desire is to share insights that can benefit each of you personally, now.

This message is divided into two parts. First, I will share a scripturally based set of principles intended to provide help at this season of your life. Then, after laying an underpinning with scriptures from the Book of Mormon, I will share counsel regarding an even more significant foundation for your life. As this is done, I feel assured that as you seek to identify this foundation, there will be available to you a greater source of direction—namely, the promptings of the Holy Spirit that can convey a personalized message from the Lord for your guidance. Of all that is communicated today, that direction should receive the

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highest priority as you try to write or remember what will be shared with you.

My soul is deeply stirred when I consider the profound, enduring, and beneficial counsel available to each of us through the priceless scriptures the Lord has prompted His prophets to record. One eloquent example of such a passage is this thoughtful, profoundly insightful counsel of Alma given to the people in Gideon:

*And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.<sup>1</sup>*

In that single verse Alma gives an extremely effective formula for success and happiness in life. Let us analyze it to determine how it can benefit you personally.

- “Ye should be humble.” For me that means that you should be completely willing to be taught by the Spirit and committed to apply consistently the lessons learned. Humility is not a condition of weakness but rather the fertile soil in which the seeds of truth can sprout and grow to fortify your life with inspired direction. Humility is an essential ingredient of strong, worthy character.
- “Be submissive and gentle.” How rich your life will be as you diligently try to be submissive to wise counsel and gentle in dealing with others. Being stubborn instead of readily applying sound advice is a barrier to spiritual guidance. Harshness in interpersonal relationships isolates one from precious friendships.
- “Easy to be entreated.” I consider this to be one of the most vitally important principles

taught by Alma. As I have tried sincerely to apply it in my own life, I have been blessed enormously—interpersonal relationships have significantly improved and many of the usual challenges of life have been eliminated. Be “easy to be entreated” in every worthy aspect of your life and you will be amazed at the problems and challenges that will be avoided or dissipated.

- “Full of patience and long-suffering.” This is not an easy goal to achieve when you are wronged, unjustly criticized, misunderstood, or ignored. Yet when you sincerely practice this principle, you will qualify for the inspiration and guidance needed to resolve potential problems.
- “Being temperate in all things.” Being temperate means to be moderate, to avoid being extreme or excessive. It also signifies being reasonable, equitable, and restrained. However, it does not mean being wishy-washy, without core principles, or void of firmly held righteous convictions. I am reminded of President Spencer W. Kimball, who was kind and understanding, but when others tried to take advantage of that gentle nature, they found that beneath his silk glove of kindness was an iron fist of resolution. Although gentle, he would never yield on a matter of doctrine or principle.
- “Being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times.” The enhancing content of this principle is found in the phrases “being diligent” and “at all times.” You can’t be diligent once. One who keeps the commandments only when convenient will not receive the strength and inspiration needed in times of difficulty. Nor does selectively obeying some commandments while ignoring others produce the same power in one’s life as does full compliance with the laws of the Lord.

- “Asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal.” The Savior taught: “Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient [meaning beneficial] for you.”<sup>2</sup> As you consistently follow the principles we have discussed to this point, you will fortify your ability to pray effectively to the Father and will better qualify for His response. Rather than ask that your desires be fulfilled, I suggest that you seek His will and obey it.
- “Always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.” Sincere gratitude is a marvelous lubricant to ease you over some of the rough spots that will inevitably come into your life. The Lord Himself has declared, “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.”<sup>3</sup>

My dear friend, I testify that your regular application of the principles just reviewed will garner you greater accomplishment, satisfaction, and peace from your diligent efforts at this university.

Now I will develop a scriptural background for the most important counsel I want to share with you.

My own personal pondering and meditation of scriptural references and other fascinating subjects such as physics, astronomy, and the extraordinary complexity of the human body have awakened a profound reverence for the unfathomable depth of the capacities of our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son Jesus Christ. It is overwhelming to realize that They focus all of this incredible ability on the accomplishment of Their paramount purpose: that we attain sufficient personal growth, development, and progress to inherit the highest and

most comprehensive blessings of our Father’s plan of happiness.

I will share something that I should have learned a long time ago but didn’t. I have become awakened to the limitless capacity of our Beloved Father and His Holy Son to express love and to feel joy, happiness, and gratitude as well as sorrow, disappointment, and sadness. This extraordinary range of capacity to feel emotion is repeatedly depicted in the scriptures, as the following Book of Mormon passages indicate:

*And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.*

*And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.<sup>4</sup>*

We cannot begin to appreciate how intense that feeling was for the Savior.

*Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.*

*For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you. . . .*

*. . . All the multitude . . . did go forth . . . with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one. . . .*

*And it came to pass that he commanded that their little children should be brought.*

*So they brought their little children and set them down upon the ground round about him. . . .*

*. . . And Jesus . . . commanded the multitude that they should kneel down upon the ground.<sup>5</sup>*

Now consider the depth of the Savior's feeling expressed in this verse:

*And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and said: Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel.<sup>6</sup>*

Think of it. The Savior of mankind groaned in agony because of the wickedness of some of the Father's children.

*And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, . . . and the multitude did bear record who heard him. . . .*

*And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.*

*And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome.*

*And . . . Jesus . . . bade them arise.*

*And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.*

*And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.*

*And when he had done this he wept again.<sup>7</sup>*

The depth of how our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ feel when They see us make mistakes or not do the things They know can bring happiness in our lives is beyond our capacity to appreciate, as is the height of Their rejoicing when we are obedient. Therefore, let us resolve to ever live righteously.

My reverence and inexpressible gratitude for the Atonement of the Holy One of Israel,

the Prince of Peace, and our Redeemer continually expands as I strive to understand more about it. I realize that no mortal mind can adequately conceive, nor can human tongue appropriately express, the full significance of all that Jesus Christ has done for our Heavenly Father's children through His Atonement. Yet it is vital that we each learn what we can about it. The Atonement is that essential ingredient of our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness without which that plan would have no significant meaning.

I strongly believe that there is an imperative need for you to strengthen your understanding of the significance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ so that it will become the secure foundation upon which to build the balance of your life. As the world in which you will live becomes more devoid of foundational standards and principles, and as honor, virtue, and purity are increasingly cast aside for the pursuit of appetite with an attitude of "me first" and "I want the biggest," your understanding of and faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ will provide much-needed strength and capacity in your life. It will also bring confidence in times of trial and peace in moments of turmoil.

I energetically encourage you to establish a personal plan to better understand and appreciate the incomparable, eternal, infinite consequences of the perfect fulfillment by Jesus Christ of His divinely appointed calling as our Savior and Redeemer. Profound personal pondering of the scriptures accompanied by searching, heartfelt prayer will fortify your understanding of and appreciation for the Atonement. Your understanding can be strengthened through related classes as well as by discussions with faculty and students. Your understanding could be enhanced by a pause in your university studies to fulfill a call as a devoted full-time missionary. Whatever path you follow, please establish for yourself a must-be-accomplished goal to acquire a better

understanding of the Atonement while you are a student at Brigham Young University.

This may seem to be a significantly added burden that you cannot realize because of the press of all else you are required to do while enrolled here. However, as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ—and I do not use those words lightly—I testify that your understanding of the Atonement and the insight it provides for your life will greatly enhance your productive use of all of the knowledge, experience, and skills you acquire at this university.

I pray that we will remember how deep are the feelings of our Father and of His Perfect Son so that our actions will generate for Them joy—not sorrow and disappointment. I encourage you to increase those things in your life that will please our Father and His Son, for which They would be grateful. And also, if needed, have an awareness of things that can be strengthened in your life so as to avoid personal remorse and concern by Them for you.

The Atonement is something that none of us can ever adequately appreciate, yet I believe that it is beneficial to try to imagine what it required of both the Father and His willing Son. Three of the things the Savior faced were:

First, an enormous sense of responsibility, for He realized that except it be done perfectly, not one of His Father’s children could return to Him, for they would be forever banished from His presence—there being no way for them to repent for broken laws. His Father’s plan would have failed, and each spirit would have been under the eternal control and torment of Satan.

Second, in His absolutely pure mind and heart He had to personally experience all that mankind would ever encounter, even the consequences of the most depraved, despicable transgressions.

Third, He had to endure the vicious attack of Satan’s hoards while physically and emotionally stressed to the limit. Then, for reasons we cannot fully know, while at the extremity of His capacity, at the time the Savior most needed succor, His Father withdrew His support. The Redeemer shouldered the onerous responsibility completely alone.

How it must have wrenched His Father with pain to hear His matchless Son cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”<sup>8</sup>

I love our Father and His Beloved Son beyond my power to express. I bear witness that They live. They love you and will make it possible for your every need to be satisfied as you qualify in obedience for all of the blessings They would want you to have on this earth. I know They live. I am an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and testify of this with every capacity of my being. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Alma 7:23.
2. D&C 88:64.
3. D&C 59:21.
4. 3 Nephi 17:5–6.
5. 3 Nephi 17:7–9, 11–13.
6. 3 Nephi 17:14.
7. 3 Nephi 17:15, 17–22.
8. Mark 15:34.