

Achieving Your Full Potential

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Good evening, my young brothers and sisters. On behalf of the First Presidency, I welcome you to this fireside.

I am impressed with the cultural diversity, the spiritual strength, and the future potential of this worldwide audience of young people.

I pray that the Spirit will touch you and me as we discuss some principles of how you can find greater success and eternal happiness in your individual lives.

Each of you are very much aware that we are living in challenging times. Since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the world has changed, never to be the same again, regardless of where in the world we may live.

Economic uncertainty is prevalent in most countries of the world. The crusade against terrorism is ever present. Preparation for war continues to escalate.

Satan's influence continues to abound, not only in the hearts of those who seek to destroy lives and property, but also on the morality and integrity of people everywhere.

President Gordon B. Hinckley gave us these reassuring but sobering words as he closed the October 2001 general conference: "Our safety lies in the virtue of our lives. Our strength lies in our righteousness. God has made it clear

that if we will not forsake Him, He will not forsake us" (CR, October 2001, 112; "Till We Meet Again," *Ensign*, November 2001, 90).

Notwithstanding the perilous nature of our time, you young people are a choice generation. You are the future of the Church. Many of you will have opportunities for considerable influence in your communities and countries as you live the commandments and stay true to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

President Hinckley has described "you as the finest generation in the history of the Church" (CR, April 1992, 96; or "A Chosen Generation," *Ensign*, May 1992, 69).

From that commendation I hope you feel the love and confidence that the prophet has for each of you. Your challenge and mine is for each of us to strive to live up to President Hinckley's and the Lord's expectations for us.

This evening I want to talk about how you might more fully meet those expectations by achieving your full potential.

Donald L. Staheli was a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 2 March 2003.

This is a time in your life when choices are made and patterns and habits are formed that will have a major impact on who you will become. Your future happiness, personal righteousness, and relationship with the Lord will depend in large part on the habits you embrace and the choices and commitments you make over these next few years.

The challenge lies in the question “Is the road you are now traveling and the present conduct of your life leading you to achieve your full God-given potential?” If you were to make no changes in the present course of your life, would you be happy with who you are and what you have become five years from now?

In posing this question, we recognize and commend so many of you who are pursuing your education in preparation for the future. You are striving to live the commandments and be true to gospel principles. Many of you have an idea of what you would like to do with your life as you prepare for marriage and dream dreams of the kind of family you would like to have. Those of you who are married are concentrating on how to make real the dreams and ambitions that you and your spouse have for the future.

On the other hand, many of you are still working on a vision for your future and the action plans that you need to follow to achieve your full potential. Some of you are challenged with some of the issues that life has handed you and may be struggling with how you can better prepare yourself for the future.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has a favorite two-word statement that he uses frequently to motivate us: “Always improving.” The implication is clear—there is room for improvement in each of our lives.

It has been said that one of the greatest tragedies of our time is that so many people live so far below their potential. President Spencer W. Kimball continually encouraged us to “lengthen our stride” and to “enlarge

our vision” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, October 1974, 5).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell said it another way: “The Lord loves each of us too much to merely let us go on being what we now are, for he knows what we have the possibility to become!” (“In Him All Things Hold Together,” *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: BYU, 1991], 107).

Implicit in the statements from each of these distinguished leaders is the message that each of us can and should do more to meet the Lord’s expectations of us.

With these statements in mind, let’s now talk about a few ways in which you can take and keep control of your lives. In so doing, you will not only find success in a temporal sense but you will be moving toward achieving a relationship with your Father in Heaven and Savior that prepares you for the prize of membership in the celestial kingdom.

Develop a Strong Testimony

First and foremost in your pursuit is the development and nurturing of a strong testimony. I assume that most of you have a basic testimony of the gospel. Yet I would suspect that many of you are being challenged by the “things of the world” with which you deal every day. By things of the world I am referring to the daily bombardment of worldly messages, enticements, and peer pressures that tend to tempt or distract you from keeping your testimony strong.

Perhaps some of you can relate to a young friend I met while serving as president of a stake that included West Point Academy in the state of New York. He was a bright 4.0 student at the academy. He had been given leave from West Point to serve a mission and was readmitted on completion of his mission—not a common occurrence at West Point. On one of my visits to the West Point Branch he requested some time to talk.

As we talked he told me of how he had deepened his conversion to the gospel as he served his mission. He remembered the feelings and strength of his testimony as he returned to West Point following his mission.

Then he said: “In the two years since my mission I have gradually felt the Spirit slipping away from me. Every day I am associating with other cadets with different values. Their whole focus in life is successfully graduating from the academy. Periodically the honor code is compromised. Nearly every weekend is party time—alcohol and young women. I am hazed and ridiculed because I have refused to join with them.

“President Staheli, I need help. I feel like I am being tossed to and fro on the seas of life and I have lost my mooring. My gospel anchor of the past seems to be giving way to the life of fun and pleasures enjoyed by my colleagues at the academy.”

As we talked it became clear that the magnet of the adversary was gradually but surely drawing him into Satan’s grasp. My young friend had lost his mooring—not because Satan’s magnet had become stronger but because he had not been nurturing and tending to his testimony. He was in the process of losing what he had previously so deeply cherished.

Many of you have already or will face similar challenges. It may not be alcohol and immorality—yet, my brothers and sisters, never forget that these are some of Satan’s most tempting attractions. They are just two of the adversary’s many magnets that look attractive on the surface and may appear harmless only because you feel you can resist.

It is essential to your testimony that you understand your relationship with your Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ. President Boyd K. Packer talked very clearly in this same broadcast last month about our premortal life, the choice to come here, and the choices we now have that determine what we may become.

Elder M. Russell Ballard has said:

Nothing is more remarkable or important in this life than to know that God our Eternal Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, have spoken again from the heavens and have called prophets and apostles to teach the fullness of the everlasting gospel once again upon the earth. That is a glorious thing to know. When you know it, that knowledge affects your life. It influences every major decision you make. It changes the course of your life to a safer one because it provides an anchor that helps hold you fast to the teachings of the gospel despite the evil influences all around you that entice you to drift toward sin and transgression. [“Anchor to the Soul,” in Brigham Young University 1992–93 Devotional and Fireside Speeches (Provo: BYU, 1993), 3]

But knowing is not always enough. You recall my young friend at West Point. He knew. He had developed a testimony, but it had slipped away from him because he failed to nourish it. As he had begun to respond to and engage in the activities of his peers, he gradually lost the promptings of the Spirit.

Often we are reminded that a testimony is like a muscle. As we nourish and exercise and use it, it develops and becomes stronger. When we fail to do so, it atrophies and becomes weak.

Our testimonies grow through faith, prayer, scripture study, and obedience to the commandments. The daily exercise and nurturing of these principles is key to a strong and resilient testimony and commitment to gospel principles. Let me comment on each of these principles.

Faith

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said the following about faith:

If there is any one thing you and I need in this world it is faith, that dynamic, powerful, marvelous element by which, as Paul declared, the very worlds were framed (Hebrews 11:3). . . . Faith—the kind

of faith that moves one to get on his knees and plead with the Lord and then get on his feet and go to work—is an asset beyond compare, even in the acquisition of secular knowledge. I do not minimize the need for study and labor. I would add to these faith and prayer, with the sacred promise that “God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost.” [D&C 121:26] [“God Shall Give unto You Knowledge by His Holy Spirit,” Speeches of the Year, 1973 (Provo: BYU, 1974), 109]

I had the privilege of returning with President Hinckley from Nauvoo on his plane following the cornerstone ceremony at the Nauvoo Temple. I was commenting on the unbelievable faith and commitment of those early Saints. I was musing that I was not sure I would have had sufficient faith to keep company with those faithful Saints. In his usual optimistic response, President Hinckley said, “Sure you would, Don.” And then he made his real point with me as he reminded me that some of the most faithful Saints faltered, lost faith, and fell by the wayside. His response strongly suggests that our testimonies are vulnerable if we do not stay on course in keeping God’s commandments.

President Hinckley frequently refers to that earlier statement in encouraging us to have “the kind of faith that moves one to get on his knees and plead with the Lord and then get on his feet and go to work.” That is sound advice for every one of us. As we follow it, our testimonies and commitments to make right choices will grow.

Prayer

Prayer is as essential to a righteous life as food and water are to our daily sustenance. Taking this analogy one step further, if we had to live on the sustenance and the frequency and intensity of some of our prayers, many of us would be much thinner than we are today.

As I reflect on my youth and the initial development of my testimony, nothing had a greater impact on its development than the faith of my mother and father and their daily application of that faith in their prayers. The Lord responded to their faith and prayers, and as children we witnessed the hand of the Lord in our family. We came to know the meaning of what Moroni meant when he said: “I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith” (Ether 12:6).

The faith of our family was tried time and again. Periodically special spiritual experiences too tender to tell followed. I bear testimony that the Lord does hear and answer prayers—prayers from the hearts of His faithful children.

As your lives become crowded with other activities, it is easy to skip a prayer or use an abbreviated version of your prayers. Don’t shortchange the Lord on your prayers. Nothing you will do during any day of your life will be more important to your temporal success or your eternal progress than consistent, humble, sincere prayers offered at least morning and night of every day.

As I visited with my young friend from West Point, it became clear that his faith had wavered and the consistency and sincerity of his prayers had waned. The joshing of his peers and the seeming attractiveness of Satan’s alternatives had begun to overshadow his commitment to exercise his faith and prayers.

Scripture Study

Equally important in the pursuit of happiness and a secure testimony is the daily habit of reading from and pondering the scriptures. This represents a significant challenge for most of us. The busier life becomes, the more difficult it is to stay connected to this important part of our spiritual growth.

One of my fellow quorum members confided to me that he had not missed a day in reading

or pondering the scriptures since he entered the Missionary Training Center in preparation for his mission. That was approximately 40 years ago. What a commitment! What dedication to the Lord! What a great example for each of us to follow!

Those who demonstrate the greatest consistency in their scripture study do so because they follow daily a set time to read. They do not speed-read so many pages a day. Rather, they read and then ponder about the application in their lives of what they have read. But they do it daily, and they do it as a serious part of their personal plan for spiritual growth.

My challenge to you tonight is to reflect carefully on how you evaluate your personal progress in the practice of your faith, prayers, and scripture study daily. Are you providing daily spiritual sustenance to your testimony? Are your actions in these areas providing the willpower against all that the adversary is showing you every day? If not, please think carefully about the changes you will make. As King Benjamin sternly admonished his people, "If you believe all these things see that ye do them" (Mosiah 4:10).

Obedience to the Commandments

Living to be worthy of the Spirit and then responding to its promptings is another important milestone in our temporal and eternal progress. It is an essential ingredient to a strong and vibrant testimony. To be worthy of the Spirit embodies the bottom line of obedient, righteous living. To truly accomplish this is the quest of a lifetime.

Nephi's early example of obedience has been taught to many of us from our youth. Lehi had not long journeyed in the wilderness before he recognized the differences in his sons. Laman and Lemuel had developed into the "murmurers" of the family. They were already playing the role of "the natural man" that King Benjamin described (Mosiah 3:19).

Conversely, Nephi made his commitment to the Lord early on when he said:

I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.
[1 Nephi 3:7]

Nephi had made the decision as to how he was going to respond to the Lord's commandments. From that point forward he was steadfast. I suspect Satan worked on him just as he does on each of us today, yet the scriptures indicate that the adversary was totally unsuccessful in affecting Nephi's decision to do the Lord's will.

The prototype of Lehi's family has played out through the centuries. The world is replete with the Lamans and Lemuels. They are some of Satan's best students. Great blessings come to those who follow Nephi's example.

Understanding and responding to the principle of obedience has singular importance in preparing us for success and eternal happiness. President Ezra Taft Benson put it most poignantly when he said: "When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power."

That is such a profound statement that I would like to repeat it—in hopes each of you will write it down so you can ponder its meaning in your life: "When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power."

Do you catch the spirit of what he is telling us? Will you carefully ponder its meaning?

Of our 13 grandchildren the youngest is now 18 months old. Her name is Zoë, and, according to Sister Staheli, she is one of the most precious, sweet granddaughters in the whole world. There is only one problem. The word Zoë learned first and likes best is *no!* The challenge to Zoë's mother is the same challenge that your mothers and mine had

as they taught us when to say “no” to the wrong things in life but how to say “yes” in response to obedience to the Lord’s commandments. Nephi had learned that lesson well. Laman and Lemuel never did.

So we see that the irritants of obedience are the impediments to God endowing us with power. Tonight before you retire and say your evening prayer, would you carefully ponder and then write down the irritants in your life that keep you from being completely obedient to the Lord’s will? As you do so, please be honest with yourself. Remember, you cannot change that which you deny or fail to acknowledge.

As you are contemplating your possible irritants, remember the counsel from Elder James E. Faust, given when he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “It will often be necessary for all of us to choose between having a good time and leading a good life” (*To Reach Even unto You* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980], 3).

Some of you may find that your list relates more to the passive things you don’t get done—not because they are irritants but because they are too low on your priority list of important things to do. Or is it because the adversary has rearranged your priorities by sidetracking your thoughts and actions?

I expect each of us have a few irritants that inhibit our progress. And some may be struggling with a number of serious irritants that have become roadblocks to enjoying the quiet whisperings of the Spirit.

Although there are several things that might qualify as irritants in your life, some of the most important ones at this stage in your life may relate to the standards of morality.

Elder M. Russell Ballard has commented on numerous occasions that Satan has a dominant influence on the media: television, movies, and the Internet. Each becomes seductive in its own way. (See “When Shall These Things Be?” *Ensign*, December 1996, 57–59.)

As young adults you may feel you can handle some of the sexually explicit programs on television without affecting your spiritual well-being. A recent *New York Times* article reported that “83 percent of the shows most watched by teenagers had sexual material; one in five included sexual intercourse.” The article stated, “Sex sells, and the fevered competition . . . keeps pushing the limits.” The author concluded that “as the boundaries expand, viewers become increasingly inured to material that they not so long ago considered taboo” (Alessandra Stanley, “The TV Watch; It’s a Fact of Life: Prime-Time Shows Are Getting Sexier,” *New York Times*, 5 February 2003, E1).

Even more pernicious are the R-rated movies that are more explicit. It is clear that frequent exposure tends to legitimize that which we see and hear. It dulls our sense of conscience between the acceptable and unacceptable. It is Satan’s way of leading you down the slippery slope toward immoral thoughts and actions.

And those parts of the Internet that move you into pornography serve as the devil’s trump card. It only takes a few viewings of pornography and he has you hooked. Then he begins to work his magic, because what you have seen and heard becomes paramount in your thought processes.

In the case of the single adult, he gradually leads them into the abyss of immorality. In the case of the married, he debases and devalues the spouse and at a minimum destabilizes relationships and spirituality in the home. At worst, it can lead to adulterous relationships and potential divorce and breakup of families.

My young friends, if you are involved in pornography in any way, stop it before it is too late.

Be careful that you don’t let Satan use his influence to control your thoughts and actions.

I believe there is a direct correlation between your ability to remove your personal irritants to obedience and the success and happiness

that you will enjoy in this life and the eternities to come.

As you are able to conquer and overcome your personal irritants to obedience, you will feel God endowing you with the power of the Spirit to resist the inappropriate things that the world and Satan would have you enjoy.

When we are able to declare as the people did to King Benjamin that there has been “a mighty change in . . . our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2), then we will be well on the road to being endowed with the power of the Spirit.

That companionship of the Spirit and the strength of your testimonies will depend on your daily nurturing of faith, prayer, scripture study, and obedience to the commandments. As you do so, you will be moving toward achieving your full potential for spiritual blessings.

Now let me visit with you for a few minutes about your secular aspirations. The Lord wants each of you to find joy and happiness and success in your professional and vocational pursuits. But He wants you to do it in a way that your ambitions for success do not supersede your priority for living gospel principles.

President Thomas S. Monson painted the picture as follows: “We have been provided divine attributes to guide our journey. We enter mortality not to float with the moving currents of life, but with the power to think, to reason, and to achieve” (“Invitation to Exaltation,” *Ensign*, June 1993, 5).

Let me suggest four simple principles that I hope you will find helpful in your pursuit of temporal and spiritual success.

1. Take Responsibility for Who You Are and What You Want to Become

Near the beginning of my remarks this evening I asked, “Is the road you are now traveling going to take you where you want to be five years from now?” I used the five-year time frame because the patterns, habits, and

actions you take with your life over the next five years will have tremendous impact on what you will become in the years that follow.

Some of you have just left parents and family to be on your own for the first time. Many of you have had more years of experience in being independent and accountable for your personal actions. Others have returned from missions to a less structured life following the discipline of a mission. Regardless of your circumstances, these are the years when you must take responsibility for who you now are and what you want to become.

Many of you are well on your way with your education and the early stages of your careers. We commend you. For those of you who are still pursuing your formal education, complete your degree or vocational training no matter the intellectual or financial struggles you may be encountering along the way.

For those of you who may not have had the opportunity for advanced education or have dropped out of school for various reasons, think carefully about where you are. Remember, education is the key to the door of opportunity. Is the road you are now traveling going to take you where you want to be? If not, what might you do to change the course you are traveling?

The Savior’s parable of the talents is so applicable to you at this stage in your lives. Jesus knows there are differences between you intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Although each of us has been blessed with various talents, some of us have been challenged with various kinds of handicaps. Therefore the Lord only expects you to magnify and develop whatever talents and abilities you have. But He expects you to be accountable for your actions in so doing.

At all costs do not allow yourself to “float with the moving currents of life,” as President Monson has counseled (“Invitation to Exaltation,” 5). Take control of your actions and prepare to succeed at whatever you are capable of doing. As President Hinckley frequently counsels,

“Just do the best you can, but be sure it is your very best” (“A Challenging Time—A Wonderful Time,” An Evening with President Gordon B. Hinckley, seminary and institute broadcast, 7 February 2003, 5).

This is also a time in your life when counsel from others can help you decide what you should be doing that will move you toward achieving your full potential.

As I look back over my life, it is the wise counsel and mentoring of a few special teachers, priesthood leaders, parents, and a loving wife that helped me make some course corrections that put me on the right road in preparation for what has turned out to be a wonderfully challenging and happy pursuit of life.

If you do not have a clear view of where you are going or what you want to do with your life, ask for help. Seek good counsel. Then follow it. There are numerous Church leaders, institute teachers, and friends who would be pleased to help counsel and mentor you through some of your challenges of life.

2. Stay Focused and Use Your Time Wisely

One of the more difficult challenges for young people, and some of us older ones alike, is to stay focused and stay on course—to finish what you have started.

I am convinced that distractions and discouragement are some of Satan’s most effective tools. He finds ways to help us make excuses as to why we can’t do this or that. He gets us involved in wasting our time and resources in things that lead us away from improving our lives and developing our talents. He blurs our focus by diverting our attention. And this can happen to the very best of you. Let me share an experience of how it happens.

A beautiful and vivacious young sister had just returned home from a very successful mission in South America. As her stake president, I had just completed an interview and released her from her mission. I asked her, “What are your plans for the future and how

are you going to keep vibrant the beautiful spirit and testimony that you have expressed here this evening?”

“Oh, that’s simple, President Staheli. I have my goals very clearly outlined.”

And then she enthusiastically recited several of her goals. They included daily prayer and scripture study, educational pursuits, and dreams of the kind of man she would marry, along with a few other goals. I commended her, thinking that this young lady really had her life together.

Several months later this young sister called for another interview—this time for a temple interview to be married and sealed in the temple to the young man of her dreams. As we finished the interview I casually asked, “How are you doing on your goals?”

“What goals?” she replied.

As I reminded her of our earlier conversation, I recited back to her a few of the goals she had articulated to me. She teared up and her face flushed with embarrassment as she said, “President Staheli, I can’t believe I have forgotten so soon that which was so important to me when I returned home from my mission.”

She still was a worthy young sister, but she had been caught up in the things of the world and had lost focus on some of the things of greatest worth to her.

To those of you who have returned from missions, we would hope and pray that you have not become too casual about nurturing your testimony and the Spirit you enjoyed while on your mission.

Staying focused, disciplined, and committed to some meaningful goals, both spiritual and temporal, is an important—in fact, essential—key to your success here in this life and in the eternities to come.

3. Have the Courage to Be Different from Those in the World Around You

One of the greatest challenges for all of us is to learn how to live in the world without participating in all that it offers.

Worldly standards will always be in a state of flux, and the only true and unchanging standards are those set by the Savior and His teachings of the restored gospel.

World standards are like fashions. They are frequently changing and testing the levels of acceptability for that which provides new excitement, pleasure, and a lure for the daring. The vice president of one of the major media networks explained: "Acceptability is an ever-expanding and retracting elastic band" (Roland McFarland, quoted in Stanley, "The TV Watch," E8).

That may be true for the world, but it is not for a true Latter-day Saint.

Unfortunately, frequent exposure to what at first is unacceptable will over time legitimize in our minds that which we have seen and heard. Be careful that you do not become the victim of this seduction.

As you dare to be different, your exemplary conduct will not go unnoticed. Although you will be tried and tested, your faithful adherence to the Lord's standards will be seen as a beacon in the night to those around you.

Since graduation from university my wife and I have lived our entire married life in the mission field. We have traveled the world as part of our business career. In the earlier years of our career, to be a nondrinking businessman was an oddity—and not a well-accepted one either. Yet, with a few exceptions, once people understood our principles and standards and our desire to stay true to them, they respected us for them.

I could recite dozens of examples of my personal experiences on this subject. I hope you will indulge me with just one.

More than a decade ago I was invited to join a small group of chairmen and presidents of companies from around the world to form

a council to advise the mayor of a very large city outside the United States. Our charge was to help him achieve world status for his city as a world-class financial center and at the same time upgrade the life and opportunities for its citizens. I was one of three heads of companies from the United States invited to join this new council. At one point I served for two years as chairman of the council.

In the meantime the mayor and I had become good friends. According to custom, the chairman of the council would join the mayor at the beginning of a major annual banquet to offer reciprocal toasts. As I stood to do so with a glass of water in hand, to my surprise the mayor explained to this large gathering that my toast would be with water. And then to my amazement he went on to make some very complimentary remarks about my standards and personal ethics.

Have the courage to be different when it is required of you to be true to the standards of the Church. You will be respected for it. And if occasionally you are not, you need not worry, because that is not the kind of association you will want or need in your future.

For those of you who are struggling with yourself because you may have crossed a line of the Lord's standards, please know there is a way back. The Lord loves you. His great atoning sacrifice was wrought so that the principle of repentance and forgiveness could be applied in each of our lives.

Make an appointment this very week to see your bishop or branch president so that he can open the door to helping you be clean and comfortable with yourself and your relationship with your Savior.

I have not addressed the standards of morality and the Word of Wisdom tonight because of what President Boyd K. Packer taught and counseled you at this same broadcast last month (see "The Instrument of Your Mind and the Foundation of Your Character" [2 February 2003], *BYU 2002–2003 Speeches* [Provo: BYU, 2003], 167–75).

His talk and very clear counsel was some of the very best that you will ever hear. If you did not hear it or cannot recall it, get a copy of his talk and study carefully how he addressed the issues of morality and the Word of Wisdom.

4. Lose Yourself in Service to Another

In closing I want to ask you for a special favor that will bring you joy and happiness as you lose yourself in service to another. Former president of the United States George Bush said, “Any definition of a successful life must include serving others” (“Remarks at a Briefing on the Points of Light Foundation,” 13 December 1990, <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/papers/1990/90121301.html>; see also Dotson Rader, “I’ve Had a Wonderful Life,” *Parade*, 1 December 1996, 5).

King Benjamin taught the standard for service when he said: “Behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

The Savior’s life, as the ultimate example of service, made clear His feelings of the importance of our service. He said: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

This evening we have talked extensively about how we prepare ourselves spiritually and temporally for our future success and happiness. We commend the many of you who are also experiencing the blessings and personal satisfaction that come from serving others.

Now for the favor: Each of you here tonight must know of one or more of your friends or acquaintances who is struggling with some of the principles we have been discussing. Some are discouraged, and some have even lost hope. Others have been disappointed or have faced daunting challenges that they were unable to understand or handle emotionally. The end result, for whatever reason, is the loss of faith in and a testimony of our Lord and Savior,

Jesus Christ. They have become less active or inactive. In many cases personal habits or transgressions have overshadowed them with guilt—to the point where it has become difficult for them to come back.

In Chicago, a large city of the United States, a survey found the names of 3,000 young adults who are members of the Church. Less than 600 of those were active. A “search-and-rescue” program was undertaken. A team effort of active young adults with the full-time missionaries and youth leaders is producing an encouraging response. Many of these inactive youth are responding to the invitation to come back.

Attendance at sacrament meeting has increased 35 percent during the first three months of this effort. That’s more than 200 additional young people attending sacrament meeting. Some are meeting with their bishops and branch presidents and clearing up the issues that have kept them away. Testimonies and commitments are being reawakened. Lives are being changed.

A new bishop of a young single adult ward in Canada organized his own search-and-rescue program. Eighteen months later the ward had taken on a new feeling of spiritual enthusiasm. Of those who returned, 61 were invited into disciplinary councils. Old issues were discussed and handled, and 58 of the 61 became active. Marriages blossomed in the ward, with 99 percent of them being sealed in the temple.

What greater service could each of you render than reaching out to someone you know who needs a helping hand to return to full fellowship in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Will you accept our challenge tonight to join with your youth leaders, priesthood leaders, and institute teachers and directors to lose your life in the service of helping another young person return to the fold?

The counsel the Lord gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith in June 1829 is applicable to each of you as you accept this challenge: “And if it

so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:15).

Summary

Now, I conclude as I began. Is the road you are now traveling and the present conduct of your life leading you to achieve your full God-given potential?

"As the finest generation in the history of the Church," much is expected of you.

In summary, keep the fire of your testimony burning brightly through faith, prayer, scripture study, and the spiritual blessings that come from obedience to the Lord's commandments.

- Take responsibility for who you are and what you want to become.

- Stay focused and use your time wisely.
- Have the courage to be different from those in the world around you.
- Lose yourself in service to another.

As you do these things the Lord will bless you and strengthen you so that you may move forward in magnifying the talents and opportunities He has given you.

I bear testimony, my brothers and sisters, of the divinity of Heavenly Father's plan for each of you. Jesus is truly our Savior, and He very much loves and cares for each of you. As you keep His commandments and follow the counsel of the prophet and your leaders, He will be there to guide you through the challenges that lie ahead.

May His choicest blessings be with each of you, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.