

# *Enjoy Your Journey*

BARBARA W. WINDER

**I**t is such a privilege for me to be with you today. On a day such as this one, I enjoy the ride from Salt Lake to Provo. Don't you love this valley surrounded by the majestic mountains! In a way these "everlasting hills," part of a chain stretching almost unbroken from Alaska to the tip of South America, reflect eternal principles you are learning as you prepare yourselves temporarily and spiritually to meet life's challenges.

## **The View from the Top**

The Lord has given some of his most meaningful sermons and taught gospel principles on mountains: the Mount of Olives, the Mount of Beatitudes, Mount Sinai. He bestowed his keys of authority to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Our family has always received inspiration and exhilaration in the nearby mountains. My husband relishes mountain climbing and has taught our family to enjoy it together. He has been the one to cheer us on. There is hardly a peak surrounding Salt Lake Valley that we have not struggled up. We might have even seen some of you on those hills.

When our children were small, they tired easily and had the normal fears about venturing too far or too high. But, reassuringly, we

accompanied them, gave encouraging words and just enough trail mix—our homemade concoction of raisins, nuts, and M&M's—to get us to the summit where we could then enjoy our refreshing oranges and smashed cheese sandwiches. The view from the top is more breathtaking than from below. And the elation of knowing you've made it is even more wonderful! The lingering sore muscles keep that feeling of accomplishment in memory a long time.

Mark Twain once boasted about "climbing" the Matterhorn in Switzerland. It seems that everyone else in his traveling group had already been to the top, so he hired a professional mountain climber in a bright red coat to hike it for him. There he sat comfortably on the deck of the inn with a hand-held telescope watching the hiker's progress up the snow-covered slopes with ropes, hammer, and pitons in hand. He was amused that he had really put one over on those who followed the traditions

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of that place. Though he paid for the trip, he did not receive its rewards. He did not feel the shortness of breath, the fatigued muscles, the powerful thirst. Nor did he see the magnificent scenes laid out before the man who conquered the mighty mountain in his place!

### **“Climb That Cliff”**

How do *we* respond when confronted with a seemingly impossible task? All of us face obstacles and challenges and walk paths that lead toward heights we think we cannot ascend. President Rex Lee and Janet have recently shared with us some of the perils of their difficult ascent, which continues to be a steep one.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks described an experience his great-grandfather Abinadi Olsen had on his mission to the Samoan Islands in 1895. Obedient to the call of the prophet, he left his wife and four small children and traveled by train and ship for twenty-six days to the island of Tutuila.

After many weeks of living in what he called a grass hut, eating strange food, suffering severe illnesses, and struggling to learn the Samoan language, he seemed to be making no progress in his missionary work. Homesick and discouraged, he seriously considered boarding a boat back to Apia and telling the mission president he didn't want to waste any more time in Samoa. The obstacles seemed insurmountable, and he wished to return to his wife and children, who were struggling to support him in the mission field.

A friend who heard Abinadi Olsen describe the experience some years after his return, quoted him as follows:

*Then one night, as I lay on my mat on the floor of my hut, a strange man entered and in my own language told me to get up and follow him. His manner was such that I had to obey. He led me out through the village and directly up against the face of a perpendicular solid rock cliff. “That’s strange,”*

*thought I. “I’ve never seen that here before,” and just then the stranger said, “I want you to climb that cliff.”*

*I took another look and then in bewilderment said, “I can’t. It’s impossible!”*

*“How do you know you can’t? You haven’t tried,” said my guide.*

*“But anyone can see”—I started to say in objection. But he cut in with, “Begin climbing. Reach up with your hand—now with your foot.”*

*As I reached, under orders that I dared not disobey, a niche seemed to open in the solid rock cliff and I caught hold. Then with my one foot I caught a toe hold.*

*“Now go ahead,” he ordered. “Reach with your other hand,” and as I did so another place opened up, and to my surprise the cliff began to recede; climbing became easier, and I continued the ascent without difficulty until, suddenly, I found myself lying on my pallet back in my hut. The stranger was gone!*

*“Why has this experience come to me?” I asked myself. The answer came quickly. I had been up against an imaginary cliff for those three months. I had not reached out my hand to begin the climb. I hadn’t really made the effort I should have made to learn the language and surmount my other problems.*

*It is hardly necessary to add that Abinadi Olsen did not leave the mission. He labored for three and a half years, until released by appropriate authority. He was an exceptionally effective missionary, and he was a faithful member of the Church for the rest of his life. [“Reach Out and Climb!” *New Era*, August 1985, pp. 4–6]*

Yes, there is pain and hard work involved in the climb, just as you are experiencing in your years in school. No one can travel your journey for you. To hike you need to meet the requirements necessary for the terrain—proper and adequate food, clothing, and equipment. And just as BYU imposes certain requirements, so will others as you continue your upward journey of eternal progression. Some of these

requirements are set by society and in the workplace. Some are set by the Lord, and many by you yourselves.

There will undoubtedly be some “insurmountable cliffs,” but generally our challenges consist of continuous peaks and valleys, one hill after another. As Elder Oaks said:

“Handholds will only be found by hands that are outstretched. Footholds are only for feet that are on the move” (Oaks, “Reach Out and Climb!” p. 6).

Facing some of life’s challenges may require a “leap of faith,” where we walk forward with only our faith and trust in the Lord to lead us. It will require all the heart and soul we have to act, to move, to reach out and grasp handholds the Lord will extend to us in times of extremity.

The Lord has promised to give us no more than we are able to handle. But those who have scaled the highest summit in the world are quick to acknowledge the help of the Sherpa guides without whom they could not have made it. They know that this support system will follow them every step of the way. They have set up base camps at certain distances to provide the necessities for the final assault at the peak. Great preparation, training, and cost have preceded their efforts.

You too have a never-failing support system. The base camps along the way are filled at various times with parents, family, friends, teachers, leaders, neighbors, or ward members—all cheering you on and providing help whenever needed. Most reliable of all is the companionship of the Holy Ghost, who can be with you at *all* times, especially when the others cannot.

### **Choosing to Build the Kingdom**

This is such a glorious time to be here on earth, witnessing the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. He saw a stone cut without hands rolling down a mountain—perhaps one such as these—and filling the whole earth! I was in a meeting just last week with the Brethren. They

were so full of the Spirit and excitement of the challenge to establish the Church in lands heretofore prohibited. It seems that almost daily something new occurs that provides more opportunity to take the gospel to other “kindreds, tongues, and people.”

And what has that to do with you here at BYU who are so privileged among the peoples of the world to receive your education and training at a university dedicated to filling the Lord’s purposes in these latter days?

We are not on earth at this time by accident. Because we lived with our Father in Heaven for a long time before we came to earth, he knows everything about us—our strengths and weaknesses, our likes and dislikes, the depth of our faith and testimony, our talents and abilities, the feelings of our hearts. He knows how each of us can use these strengths and characteristics for the building of the kingdom of God in these latter days.

President Benson said:

*All through the ages the prophets have looked down through the corridors of time to our day. Billions of the deceased and those yet to be born have their eyes on us. Make no mistake about it—you are a marked generation. There has never been more expected of the faithful in such a short period of time as there is of us. . . .*

*. . . Each day we personally make many decisions that show where our support will go. The final outcome is certain—the forces of righteousness will finally win. What remains to be seen is where each of us personally, now and in the future, will stand in this fight—and how tall we will stand. Will we be true to our last-days, foreordained mission? [“In His Steps,” *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 1979, pp. 59–60]*

What are the ramifications of the prophet’s statement? What meaning can it have for each of us here today?

In 1974 President Spencer W. Kimball spoke prophetically: “The Lord will open doors when

we have done everything in our power” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, October 1974, p. 10). He referred to nations and peoples of the world allowing missionaries and members to fulfill their divine missions to bring souls to Christ. Some time afterward I heard a priesthood leader ask a congregation, “How many of you here heard President Kimball say that when we have done all in our power to prepare doors will open?” Many people raised their hands. He then asked those with raised hands, “How many of you have enrolled in a class that matters? Are you taking Mandarin or Russian? If Russian is too hard, start with Spanish.” Of course, few, if any, of you students heard President Kimball in 1974. Most of you were small children. But now you have heard it this day. And what are you going to choose to do that really “matters”?

It has always been a concern to me that as I have shared the anxieties of our children, most of the important decisions upon which our journey of life is based are made between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five, just where most of you students are now. Will I serve a mission? Will I go on to higher education? Where? What will I study? Whom will I marry? Where will I marry? Am I prepared to marry in the Lord’s way? What occupation will I select? Do I want to have children? If I am a mother, will I work outside the home? What kind of environment will permeate my future home, whether it is an apartment, condo, or bungalow? Will it invite or repel the Spirit? These and other questions have been or must be answered by both men and women here today. Decisions such as these are not always based on choices of good and evil, but on good judgment, obedience, values, established patterns.

Life is a journey, not a destination. Elder Boyd K. Packer stated: “Our lives are made up of thousands of everyday choices. Over the years these little choices will be bundled together and show clearly what we value” (“The Choice,” *Ensign*, November 1980, p. 21). During our

lifetime each of us will have countless decisions to make. Many of them will have great consequences and impact on our lives both here and in eternity. From the time Adam and Eve exercised their freedom of choice (Moses 3:17), their posterity has been faced, as *they* were, with choices between good and evil.

Elder Packer has acknowledged that

*the crucial test of life . . . does not center in the choice between fame and obscurity, nor between wealth and poverty. The greatest decision of life is between good and evil. . . .*

*Some are tested by poor health, some by a body that is deformed or homely. Others are tested by handsome and healthy bodies; some by the passion of youth; others by the erosions of age.*

*Some suffer disappointment in marriage, family problems; others live in poverty and obscurity. Some (perhaps this is the hardest test) find ease and luxury. [Packer, “The Choice,” p. 21]*

The Book of Mormon emphasizes a recurring theme: the need to choose between being spiritually minded or carnally minded. President Thomas S. Monson has spoken of the importance of choosing between these two kinds of “mindedness” when he said, “We . . . have the responsibility to choose. We cannot be neutral. There is no middle ground. The Lord knows this; Lucifer knows this” (“3R’s of Free Agency,” *New Era*, April 1973, p. 4).

My brothers and sisters, how essential it is to make decisions anchored in gospel principles! By seeking the guidance of the Spirit, we can be assured of divine help. We need to remember our covenants and live accordingly in whatever walk of life we find ourselves. You are different from the rest of the world! You are a covenanted people! It is important to remember that in our premortal life we accepted and sustained the divine plan presented there. We understood much of what we would be asked to do. As President Spencer W. Kimball said:

*We made vows, solemn vows, in the heavens before we came to this mortal life. . . . We have made covenants. We made them before we accepted our position here on the earth. . . . We committed ourselves to our Heavenly Father, that if he would send us to the earth and give us bodies and give to us the priceless opportunities that earth life afforded, we would keep our lives clean and would marry in the holy temple and would rear a family and teach them righteousness. This was a solemn oath, a solemn promise.* [From a talk at the University of Utah Institute of Religion, 10 January 1975, p. 2]

Do not forget that the Lord desires strong marriages and families. These are not easily achieved in today's world where "siren sounds" of materialism, infidelity, and carnal mindedness pull us toward selfishness and pride. The family is in critical condition! Its health is being threatened from many sides. We need not look far for evidence of its deterioration, even within the Church.

Addressing 2,000 people at the Conservative Women's Conference in London, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described the family as the "building block of society," saying it "far surpassed the state in the provision of welfare" and "fashioned the beliefs of succeeding generations."

"Policy must be further directed at strengthening the family," she added. "It encompasses the whole of the society. It fashions our beliefs. It is the preparation for the rest of our life." (See *Church News*, 9 July 1988, p. 5.)

President Thomas S. Monson commented on her remarks, noting that "perhaps the world, at long last, is recognizing that strong families play a vital role in the stability of a nation and, indeed, the world" (*Church News*, 9 July 1988, p. 5). Referring to the home and family as the most important job of all, C. S. Lewis said it "is the one for which all others exist."

How desperately we need the training and preparation necessary in these troubled times where marriages and families are disintegrating

all around us. It is reassuring that the latest figures from the American Home Economics Association show that BYU has twice as many student members as any other college or university in the state. The rumor that "you can't major in home economics anymore at BYU" can be laid to rest. The home economics (certification) major will continue.

We simply cannot do too much in this regard. Too much is at stake. President Benson has declared that Satan seeks to destroy an entire generation. Is he working with you? Will he get to your children? The family is in peril! Let us prepare as never before because we face a spiritual life-and-death time in our families' journey.

The greatest help you will ever have in this life is the Holy Ghost! Cultivate him as a friend and constant companion. We are promised that "God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now" (D&C 121:26).

Think of it! You who have been baptized have received an "unspeakable" power! A power to help with the multitude of decisions, a power to teach, to warn, to comfort. It helps us love more deeply, serve more unselfishly, live more fully.

Scriptures, too, will help in the decision-making process. Nephi taught us to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). We are promised that when we read the scriptures, we can testify that we have heard his voice and know his words (see D&C 18:36).

Someone has said that when we want to talk to the Lord, we pray, and when he wants to talk to us, it is through the scriptures: "For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another" (D&C 18:35).

We need to learn to be obedient, not only to the prophets who lead us today, but to the promptings of the Spirit. Elder Richard G. Scott learned this lesson on a Sunday in Mexico City when he sat listening to a priesthood lesson. The teacher wasn't a great scholar, and his presentation was not polished. But it was obvious that he loved the Lord and his brethren and had a humble desire to share the gospel with them. A sacred feeling enveloped the room.

As he listened, Elder Scott received a spiritual confirmation of the lesson's message and also some impressions for his personal benefit. He wrote them down and found that he had been given precious truths he greatly needed to be a more effective servant of the Lord. Through the morning, he continued writing the impressions that poured into his mind and heart.

Then Elder Scott said:

*I don't think my experience in receiving promptings is different from others. But I believe we often leave precious personal direction of the Spirit unheard because we do not record and respond to the first promptings that come to us when we are in need or when impressions come in response to urgent prayer. [Tambuli, February 1990, pp. 22–23]*

### **A Commitment to Serve**

We have talked about prayer, scripture study, and obedience. Of what value are they unless they are accompanied by a commitment to serve others, to build the kingdom of God as Daniel saw it, and to "bring again Zion"? (See D&C 113:8.)

So many of us say, "I know the gospel's true, but. . ." This is a terrestrial kind of thinking. We place barriers between what we believe and what we are willing to do to apply it. The Lord has made it abundantly clear that we are to do the work we have seen him do. We demonstrate a celestial attitude when we can truly say, "I know the gospel's true. Therefore . . ." You see the difference? It is precisely

*because of our faith and testimony of our Savior that we are willing to do what he asks us to do, even to do what needs to be done without being asked!*

A commitment to serve may be best expressed within our homes. Don't forget—that apartment or dormitory you live in is your home for now, and your roommates are "family." There are countless opportunities in the sphere of your influence at this time to serve, to selflessly place someone else's needs before your own. Are you home teaching? Visiting teaching? Accepting a calling in your ward? Loving your companion? And for those with children—are you teaching and training them?

Our service may take us to other places, some far away. We have been told that the first ten missionaries to Czechoslovakia are being processed right now. There isn't even a language training program at the MTC for them yet. What a "leap of faith" for them. May the Lord bless them in their "seemingly insurmountable cliffs." They need only to reach out and take hold with willing hands and place their feet where the Lord will take them.

President Thomas S. Monson has described such a "leap of faith" with Elder John H. Groberg.

*As a lad just twenty, called to the Tongan Mission, he was assigned to an outer island with a native missionary. After eight seasick days and sleepless nights on a storm-tossed sea, they reached their destination. Not one soul on the island spoke English. Here he acquired his gift of the language. Then came a devastating hurricane which struck the isolated island with tropical intensity, destroying the food crop and contaminating the water supply. There was no means of communication with the outside world. The supply boat was not due for almost two months. After four weeks the precious store of food, mainly taro, a native vegetable, was severely rationed. Four additional weeks passed. All food was gone. No help arrived. Bodies became*

*emaciated, hope dwindled, confidence waned, some died. In desperation, John Groberg waded into the swampland where insects covered his face and, with a sweep of his hand, entered his mouth— his only nourishment.*

*The end drew near. The island's inhabitants sat in an idle stupor. One morning, nine weeks from the time of the hurricane, John Groberg felt a gentle hand upon his shoulder. He turned his head and gazed into the eyes of an elderly Tongan man. Slowly and with meticulous care, the old man unwrapped a precious prize, even his most treasured possession—a small can of berry jam. He spoke: "I am old; I think I may die. You are young; you may live. Accept my gift."*

*What were the words penned by Charles Dickens in a Tale of Two Cities? "It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done; it is a far, far, better rest that I go to than I have ever known." Add to them the declaration of the Savior: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*

*Then came the speck on the horizon and a shout of joy as the supply ship came into view. [Thomas S. Monson, "The Miracle of the Friendly Islands," CR, 5 October 1968]*

We learn a lot about Elder Groberg's commitment to serve, but think also of the old Tongan who was willing to give all he had to save another's life. It symbolizes the atonement of one who also was willing to give all for each of us.

We were given the power to make choices in the premortal existence. The gift of agency followed us into mortality. We not only can control our choices, but we can control our attitudes. While we may not always be in control of all that happens in our lives, we can yet be in control of how we respond to those events.

Don't let your fears of the unknown cause you to procrastinate and paralyze your efforts. In Don Quixote, Sancho Panza spent the night clinging to a window sill for fear of falling to his death, only to discover the next morning that his feet were only a few inches from the ground.

Enjoy your journey! Yes, there is a lifetime of mountains to climb, summits to reach. "To miss the joy is to miss it all!" There *are* valleys as well as peaks, broken bones as well as victory feasts, exhaustion as well as jubilation. And through it all, we can follow our Savior who seems to be saying, "Come, follow me. I am here. The view from where I am is so much better and clearer. I can see the past, present, and future all at the same time and they are continually before me" (see D&C 130:7).

May you prepare prayerfully, trusting in the Lord who knows each of you by name and who cares so much that you make the right decisions about what matters most. May you help further the work of these latter days in establishing the "mountain that will fill the whole earth that will stand forever," I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.