

“Deep Roots Are Not Reached by the Frost”

DWAN J. YOUNG

It is an honor for me to be with you today. Although I didn't attend the Y, I have great pride in this university. I am proud of what you accomplish. I am impressed by your spirit and your enthusiasm and your unity. I hope that you take advantage of every moment that you are here. Take advantage of every opportunity before it is finished because this is a great university.

I feel it is a great responsibility to offer some thoughts to keynote the women's conference that will be held this week.

The interesting theme taken from the *Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien—“Deep Roots Are Not Reached by the Frost”—suggests many things. Because I am the general president of the Primary, it is not surprising that I would first think of children. And then as I contemplated the words of the theme, I also thought about trees. As I explored the thoughts that came to my mind, I found myself wanting to say something to you of growth and potential; something about hanging on in adversity; something of the life-giving, healing balm of loving service; and something of the challenges of life and the great promises of the eternities to come.

The Englemann Spruce

Our family spends most of our vacation time in the Bear Lake valley, where we have a cabin. When our children were young, one of our favorite activities was to go exploring the mountains in our open Jeep. Many a day we would pile into the red Jeep, all seven of us and the dog, and off we would go. There were no restrictions in those days, and so we were able to go almost anywhere. One day, when we were about twenty-five miles up St. Charles Canyon, we came upon a Forest Service sign pointing the way to the Englemann Spruce. We decided to see what the Englemann Spruce was. So we stopped the Jeep and walked up the narrow path. Truly, we were not expecting what we found at the end of the trail.

The Englemann Spruce is magnificent. It is a beautiful, thriving tree with deep blue green needles more than an inch in length. Its trunk is straight and more than one hundred feet tall. The tree is nearly twenty feet around. We all took hands and encircled the tree. We had to stretch to reach around that

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mighty trunk. The Forest Service estimates this tree has been growing there for more than two thousand years. Each of us standing there holding hands and feeling a little awestruck by this magnificent tree thought different things, I'm sure. I wondered about how it grew to be so large.

How Trees Grow

It is fascinating to learn how trees grow. Trees are the biggest plants in the world. They never stop growing as long as they live. Every new tree begins its life in a flower. There are many kinds of trees, and within each kind there are many different sizes and shapes. Only a few ever grow to be the size of the mighty specimen we had encircled.

The *World Book Encyclopedia* says:

A seed starts to grow when a grain of the pollen dust of a tree flower is caught on the sticky pistil of a flower of the same kind of tree. When a tree seed begins to grow, a new tree is 'born.' This tree inside a seed is extremely small, but it has all the essential parts needed for a tree. It has a tiny white thread which will some day turn into the trunk. This thread has a root tip at one end and a bud at the other end, plus two tiny leaves. This baby tree is packed into a tiny parcel with a good supply of food. It is covered with a weatherproof coat. When the seed is ripe, it leaves the parent tree and goes traveling. . . . Tree seeds often open and grow on top of the ground or lying on leaves, if the spot is wet enough to soften their hard seed coats. Then, by a wonderful law of nature, the thread-like stem expands and grows longer and stronger. The end with the root tip turns down pointing into the ground. Even if you turn over an opening seed so that its root end points up, it will turn down in a few hours, as though pulled by gravity. At the same time, the tip with the bud and the leaves turns up, as though pulled by the light of the sun.

It was hard to believe that this mighty spruce could have started as one tiny seed, but of

course it did.

Those of you who have studied botany know what happens in the process of growth. A tree develops a crown. The uplifted trunk and outreaching branches and network of twigs make a broad, tall frame for the leaves. The leaves soak in the sunlight. The leaves use air, water, and sunlight to make food for the plant. A tree also develops a root system. The roots are the fastest growing part of a tree. Roots are longer and usually have more branches than the crown above them. They collect water in the damp ground and send it up the trunk to the leaves. The roots also serve as a mighty anchor which holds the tree upright.

The roots can only grow as fast as they get energy from the leaves in the form of sugar, vitamins, and hormones. The food-making operation of the leaves is controlled by the amount of water sent from the roots. There is in the tree a marvelous example of the constant interdependency and a graphic example of how the continuance of small acts leads to remarkable growth and strength. Our giant tree seemed almost indestructible, but of course it wasn't and it isn't. Just let the day come when the giant reaching, searching taproot cannot find a steady source of water, and the tree will begin to wither and fade. Death would not likely come by one mighty blow, but more likely by a gradual withering away.

The Root System

Well, we cannot go on all morning talking about how trees grow, but there's one other fascinating fact that I learned as I prepared for this moment today. The root system provides a long, strong taproot that pushes ever downward in a search for more and more water, and to give stability to the tree. But the chief water-collecting part of the root system is made up of tiny, pearly white hairs called root-hairs. The root-hair is as fine as a spider's thread. It grows so fast, the encyclopedia says, that you can see it lengthen if you watch the plant

under a microscope. Root-hairs grow just back of the tip of the root. They appear suddenly, wherever there is moisture. Root-hairs push between soil particles. When it finds a particle that is covered with a film of moisture, the root-hair flattens and wraps around the particle to suck up the water. New hairs are constantly coming out and old ones are withering. The root-hairs are constantly radiating outward to increase the absorbing surface so that the tree might enjoy enough of the life-giving water.

Knowing that the Englemann Spruce reached more than one hundred feet in the air, just think what an amazing root system it has developed in the two thousand years—a system that we could not see, but that stretched down below us and reached out on every side.

I don't know what each of my children thought about this great tree as we stood encircling it with our stretching arms, but I do know that they remember the tree.

There are many things to think about when one looks at trees. I couldn't help reflecting on all that happened during the life of this tree, stretching back to just a few years before the birth of Christ—before cars, before television, before E.T. and Mork, and before Pac-Man. Interesting, isn't it, that this tree was here on the earth when the Savior came into the world to fulfill all that had been prepared before the foundation of the world?

Fascinating Parallels

There are some fascinating parallels in the life of the tree and in the life of a child. It occurs to me that children too come into the world very much like a flower—fragile and beautiful. There is in the newborn baby a special quality of innocence, potential, and vulnerability which evokes a very special tenderness. I never hold a baby without an overwhelming sense of wonder. The miracle of life overpowers me, and I find the infant beautiful no matter how different and unique it may be.

Just as the fertile seed of the tree possesses all of the essential parts needed to be a full-grown tree, so the unborn child from its inception has all the essential parts needed to become a full-grown human being. Inside each baby, as inside each fertile seed of the tree, there is the potential for mighty growth. Just as the seeds of the tree bring forth after their kind, so we too come forth after our kind.

We Are Children of God

We should never forget that we are children of God, and that means that there is within us the necessary power to become like our Father. It is an eternal principle—God has brought forth his own kind in us, and we have the potential to become as he is. This means that there is no end to our growth and development. I think it is a concept which gives comfort and hope to our lives.

We must never forget that we have this eternal potential. Achieving potential is one of the fundamental purposes of life itself.

Knowing then that we have this potential, we should not question our fundamental worth. One of the most significant contributions that the Primary makes in the lives of our children, and I believe in the lives of our officers and teachers, is to give us all these first straightforward statements of belief.

It is not a coincidence that the Primary song "I Am a Child of God" is so greatly loved around the world. "I am a child of God" is a simple statement of a magnificent concept. You can understand it, I can understand it, and all the children of the world, no matter what their language, can understand it:

*I am a child of God,
And he has sent me here,
Has given me an earthly home,
With parents kind and dear
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,
Help me find the way.*

[Naomi Randall, “I Am a Child of God,” *Sing with Me*, no. b-76]

Almost all the work of Primary is designed to help our children find the way.

What We Are on Earth to Do

First, all of us must understand what we have come on earth to do. We’re here to gain wisdom and knowledge. We’re here to learn to love and to give service one to another. Being able to repeat the simple statements which summarize these great concepts is not all there is to learning. Learning also requires an application in daily life.

Life is a wonderful adventure, and working with the Primary children has brought back into my life a renewed enthusiasm for living. Children have a simple way of dealing with life. It is an approach that should not be lost. A child learns most when he or she is taught how to apply a moral teaching. Let me share with you an experience of my childhood. It made one of the ten commandments forever a part of my life. I speak of the commandment, “Thou shalt not steal.” As a little girl, I worked in a small grocery store that my father owned and operated. One day while I was stocking the shelves, I noticed some little candies called “Guess-What’s” on the counter. There was penny candy on the counter every day, but on this day which I shall never forget, I found myself wanting to have one of those little “Guess-What’s,” but I had no penny to pay for it. Somehow the wanting got the best of me, and although I knew it was not right, I picked up one of those little tempting candies and walked away. I cannot tell you how dreadful I felt. I knew I had done something wrong. I knew that ‘because I was nine years old’ my baptism would not cancel out this wrong deed. I felt terrible. I made up my mind I would never, ever take anything again which did not belong to me. I had been taught about honesty, and in that moment the Spirit confirmed the

truth of that teaching by the terrible, disquieting spirit which raged within me as I violated that law. Children learn very rapidly, and what they experience stays with them a very long time.

Let me tell you about an incident that happened last October in Washington, D.C. I was there for the Women’s Legacy Concert. During the day, a group of us went to the National Museum of Art. We stopped for lunch at the Gallery, and as the waiter brought the bill to me he said, “Do you want me to fill in the amount, or do you want to do that?” For just a moment, I did not catch the importance of his question. Then it came to me. He was giving me a chance to pad my expense account. I was distressed by the suggestion, and the teachings of my childhood came back to me—Be Honest. My own standard of honesty was what counted. It was a matter of integrity with me.

Integrity is built by little actions. When my son, who is a counselor in the priests quorum presidency, declines to leave a meeting on Sunday in order to go to the corner ice-cream store, he is building his own character. When we get up and leave a movie that is offensive to our own standards of decency, we’re developing strength of character. Like the tree, we’re sending small root-hairs out, and one day that massive system will be strong enough for us to stand firm against raging torrents.

Lisa, Who Dared to Do Right

I think of a little girl in England who dared to do right. The little girl’s name is Lisa. She is an eleven-year-old girl in Primary and has been a member of the Church for three years. Lisa came home from school feeling very excited. She had been asked if she would read in the school assembly the following morning. She said, “Mum, I’ve been asked to read this tomorrow, but some of the words are wrong.” The mother read the paper, and one paragraph referred to God and the Holy Ghost being one

and the same person. The rest of it was correct, but just this paragraph was incorrect. They talked it over and decided that they would send a letter to Lisa's teacher, explaining that this paragraph was contrary to Lisa's beliefs and that she would feel much happier leaving this part out.

They waited rather anxiously for Lisa to return home from school to see what had happened. She came home with a big smile. Yes, the teacher had let her read the part, and, yes, she had let her leave that statement out. Also the teacher had thanked them for the letter, saying that she could understand her feelings, and then she said, "Could you please send some material to me and tell me more about what Mormons believe?"

The next day Lisa took a Book of Mormon, *Meet The Mormons*, and *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* and gave them to the teacher. She found the books so interesting that she asked Lisa and three other Mormon girls in the school to present an assembly on the Mormons.

All of this came about because Lisa dared to be different and do right. Would you have the courage Lisa had?

Association With Children

When Jesus said we could not enter the kingdom of God except we become as a little child, I'm sure he was urging us to keep our sense of wonder. I'm sure he was reminding us to remain teachable. I feel sure he was encouraging us to keep our sense of accepting faith and our curious search for what makes the world go around. We can learn much from children.

If you do not have the opportunity to associate with children in your family, or if you do not serve in Primary, then you must take some action yourself. One young woman I know (her name is Gerry Avant, and you have probably read her by-line in the *Church News*) found herself in a situation where there were no children close to her. She did not want to be deprived of

that experience, and she decided to do something about it. She arranged a clown party for the children of her neighborhood. The party was so successful that one little girl came to Gerry and said her family was moving, but she did not want to go because she would miss the next clown party.

More importantly, two of the little girls from two different families became Gerry's friends. They would come over to her house to play. Gerry has a large unfinished basement, and she provided them with puppets and some help in writing a script. Then the girls made a puppet stage from some large, empty cardboard cartons. After awhile they decided to invite the girls' families over for a family home evening. Gerry offered to buy cookies, but the girls wanted to use her kitchen and make brownies. She agreed. I tell you about this party because I think Gerry did an innovative and fun thing which enriched not only her own life, but the lives of some children.

There need be no barriers between adults and children, and oh, how the world's children need us to be mindful of them!

The Deepest Taproot: Faith

The deepest taproot of any human life is the one we might call faith. Do you remember Alma likening the word to a seed? This passage tells us how important it is to prepare a place for the seed to grow. Let me tell you about a stake Primary president in Hawaii who had prepared herself. Last fall her six-year-old son was run over by a car. Though the emergency medical team arrived before he died, she told me that when she picked up his little body and held it close, she knew he would not live. Others who knew her marveled at her great strength in the face of this terrible tragedy. "How did you get prepared to meet the loss?" I asked her. This is what she told me:

In the summer before the accident, I began to slip into a feeling of deep depression. I tried to talk myself out of it, but I could not. I prayed and I thought, and I had the strong impression that I was not doing my scripture reading. Another strong impression came to me: I was not attending the temple regularly. I resolved to do something in response to these feelings. I began to read my scriptures regularly, and I began to go to the temple twice a month. As I began to do them consistently, a strength and a peace came to me. When the accident happened, I was fortified. I could go on because I knew that he had died a celestial being, and I could become more nearly like him if I kept closely tuned.

That's one person's experience, but it illustrates how she sent out her little root-hairs to find more of the life-giving water that sustains.

Loving Service

We have talked about growth and potential, about gaining strength from adversity. When we are converted, we can stand alone against the storms around us, secure in the knowledge of the revealed truth. Then we can reach out and serve others. Acts of service can be very small or very large, but all should be done in the spirit of increasing our awareness of another's burdens.

This building of one's ability to give loving service does not need to wait upon a master plan. It can begin today. We always start where we are and then develop a plan to direct our efforts.

One of the most rewarding experiences I have had this year came when I decorated some rooms in a rest home with gas-filled balloons. These simple, colorful ornaments brought cheerful smiles and happy eyes.

At Christmastime I accepted an invitation to participate as a sub for Santa. I went to a grateful but humble little home. They had done all they could, but needed some help. Our family provided the finishing touches. But what I want to tell you about is the gift

this little family gave back to the world. They had a little home in the middle of an industrial area. I did not go inside the home, but the outside was brightly lighted with Christmas lights adding a cheery holiday glow to that dreary, dismal neighborhood.

So let me urge you to realize that your first task to prevent the frost from killing your roots is to fill up with faith and testimony, to develop deep and complex root systems which make you sensitive and thoughtful of others. These two principles will give you the kind of strength and magnificence we saw in the giant Englemann Spruce on that day so long ago.

The Children of the World

Now may I share with you my deep concern for the children of the world. Who is caring for them? How will they get the loving nourishment they need to grow up into strong moral citizens? We all know what the Lord's plan is. He wants all his spirit children to come into the world where they can be cared for by a loving father and mother. He wants them to have stimulation for growth and refinement. He wants them to be taught the eternal truths of the gospel so they can stand firm against the winds of circumstance. He wants them to know the principles of salvation so that they can be about the business of working out their own salvation. I firmly believe that each of us has a responsibility to take the Lord's pattern and make it operative in our lives. We all belong to family units, either as a parent or as a child, and we should soberly address our attention to making those family units the place of hope and renewal which our Heavenly Father has taught us they can become.

But there are people and children whose circumstances in life are not favorable. The growth of the number of women in the workplace has shifted the care of children to alternate arrangements. More children now have mothers working out of the home full-time than has been the case in America before.

Arrangements for children are made in day-care centers, with other relatives, or some other care-taking situation. Unfortunately, millions of school-age children have become latchkey children. That means they come home to empty houses and unsupervised hours of waiting. Many others of preschool years are left locked in their apartments while mothers go out to help provide the financial support for the family.

These are not ideal conditions for children. Study after study is carefully, painstakingly documenting for us the great need for infants and children to have loving, one-to-one care during their formative years.

Dr. Benjamin S. Bluhm of the University of Chicago declares that a child has gone 50 percent of the way in organizing the thinking patterns that we call his intelligence by the time he has reached the age of four, and the next 20 percent occurs by the age of eight.

Bruner observed that the child learns from careful, constant modeling, preferably of the mother. A skill is learned, reinforced—then the child reaches further. For this to be successful the child needs time—a lot of time—with some one person who cares enough and has time enough. Children without this one-to-one care do not develop so well.

Dr. Lamb, at the University of Utah, has recently compiled some of his studies into a book concerning infant social development. He found that the kind of response given an infant sets up lifetime patterns of expectancy. When a young child grows up in a home where the adult interaction is sensitive and caring, then the child comes to expect this relationship with other adults.

I read an article last year in *Time* magazine written by Roger Rosenblatt entitled “Children of War.” He interviewed children in Ireland, Lebanon, Israel, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In spite of the terrible conditions in which they live, the children have something in common—a fierce desire to survive. In all their suffering

and sorrow, these children still believe in goodness and in the need for good to overcome bad. Two things we might remember from these children: (1) They want to live, and (2) they reach out instinctively for the good. That does not surprise me for I know, as you do, that children are really celestial beings who dwell among us, saved in the celestial kingdom if they die before eight years of age. These children should be an example to us as they look forward with hope to a brighter day.

Conclusion

Another who experienced sorrow and suffering was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He once said that he felt like a lone tree standing on the plain. He learned early in his life to send his roots deep so that his faith would steady him. He learned to develop a widely spread system of roots which could constantly nourish him. Think of the sensitive awareness he had of people. Think of the constant development of awareness of other people which made him sensitive to their needs. The people who knew him said he was a man of love and unceasing compassion. He was a man of prayer who sought the Lord, and the results were that people reached back to him and sustained him, and the Lord heard his prayers and came unto him.

These things we too must do here and now. We must seek the Lord, and we must become sensitive to the needs of others. Then we must give service to one another. Service is the life-giving water which renews our souls and lets us continue in our growth. There are plenty who need our loving concerns: the young, whom I’ve mentioned specifically, and many others who are around you every day. There is the power within us to do much good, for we are the children of God.

We have come to the end of our time together this morning, and I would like to observe that the ways you will use the ideas I’ve expressed and the ideas which you will

hear from your conference speakers during the week are many and varied. But I hope that some of the things which are said will find their way like seeds into the soil of your heart and they will grow and grow until they give sustenance to your soul.

*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost,*

*The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.*

May we grow strong and tall in our convictions. The day may come when we will have to stand as a lone tree against the sky. Let us become as that Englemann Spruce, each a mighty witness for the truth, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.