Brothers and sisters, it is good to be with you on another great day at BYU–Idaho. Sister Clark and I express our gratitude to the Lord for the opportunity to serve with you. We love you very much.

I want to speak to you today about the purposes and the power of the Honor Code used throughout the Church Educational System (CES). The elements of the Honor Code are familiar to you. For example, they are included almost entirely in For the Strength of Youth and the Missionary Handbook.

I rejoice at this privilege to speak to you who are so good, so obedient, and so choice in the eyes of the Lord. Great blessings come from obedience. You know this because of your own experience. You keep the commandments and your commitments to live the Honor Code because of your personal integrity and your faith in the Lord and His promises. Your faithful obedience invites the Spirit on this campus and thus is a great blessing to all who work and study here.

It is the desire of my heart that what I say today will help you increase your understanding of the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code and to be even more obedient and faithful in keeping your commitments and your covenants.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

My starting point today is the contrast between two very different choices made in the parable of the prodigal son. Although you are not prodigals, you all face the choices described in the Savior’s parable about a son who asked for his inheritance from his father and then “wasted his substance with riotous living.”1 In the language of the Book of Mormon, the prodigal son “became for [himself].”2 He sought to do his own will and turned toward selfish desires and the pleasures of the world. He chose darkness instead of light.

After the prodigal son wasted his inheritance, he survived by tending swine. In this sorry state, he recognized the wrongs he had done and who he really was. As the Savior taught, the prodigal son “came to himself.”3 He chose to repent, to turn away from selfishness and sin and turn to God, to his home, and to his true identity.

In our lives we face this choice very often: are we going to “become for ourselves,” turn to selfish desires and the darkness of unrighteousness? Or are we going to “come to ourselves,” turn to Christ and the light of the gospel? Sometimes that choice can be hard to see and to make because Satan does everything in his power to disguise the darkness of evil with fun and excitement. Our selfish, worldly desires can seem very attractive.

The prodigal son reveled in the pleasures of the world for a while, and then he found the pain and darkness they bring. Yet our Heavenly Father did not leave him alone and adrift in his confusion and suffering, and He does not leave us alone either. As Elder Robert D. Hales has taught:

“Throughout our lives, whether in times of darkness, challenge, sorrow, or sin, we may feel the Holy Ghost reminding us that we are truly sons and daughters of a caring Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we may hunger for the sacred blessings that only He can provide. At these times we should strive to come to ourselves and come back into the light of our Savior’s love.”4

Too often we get so caught up in the things of the world and neglect the things of God so much that we do not notice that little by little our vision has become clouded, our perspective constrained, and our understanding darkened. It is as if a brown fog of worldliness slowly covers our eyes and our lives, and we begin to wander into the darkness of sin.

That is not the plan! It is not the way! We can turn to Christ; break out of that fog; and find the pure, illuminating light of His gospel. With it comes color! And clarity! And perspective! And understanding! And joy in Christ! Through the Atonement of Christ, we can receive that buoyant, life-giving freedom from the chains of sin, from despair, and from the brown film of the world.
This is a pattern I want you to use to understand and live the Honor Code at BYU–Idaho. Take a moment and look at the elements of the CES Honor Code on the screen. They are part of the new Honor Code website launched by the university this morning. As you can see, every aspect of the Honor Code is connected to the Savior and His gospel. The Honor Code helps you “come to yourself” and turn to Christ so that He may protect you from evil and prepare you to be His true disciples and leaders in your families, in your communities, and in the kingdom of God.

**Protection and Preparation**

Protection and preparation are supernal blessings. Consider first the blessing of protection. You and I live in a war zone. In fact, President Packer has taught us that we are living in enemy territory. Going on all around us is a great war between good and evil that began in the pre-mortal realm and continues today on earth. The university and the people who work and study here are under attack. Because this university prepares you to be disciples of Christ who build up the kingdom of God and establish Zion, the adversary gives special focus to this place. The Honor Code is one of the most important protections we have from the forces of evil.

Your commitment to keep the commandments of the Lord can be a great protection to you. In a world full of temptation and evil, being honest, living the Word of Wisdom, being chaste and virtuous, and respecting others requires faith in Christ, rock-solid obedience, and listening to the whisperings of the Spirit. If you make and keep that commitment, it will become a central part of who you are and who you are becoming and the Lord will protect you.

You have seen and will see many attempts to disguise the pain and spiritual destruction of unrighteousness with temporary excitement and pleasure. Satan and those who follow him will try to entice you into sin and darkness with their lies. Do not be fooled. Listen to the Spirit. If you keep the commandments, the Spirit will warn you when you are in danger. When that warning comes, your commitment to live the Honor Code will help you do what is right. In the critical moment of decision, you will feel the guidance of the Spirit. You will turn to the Lord, and He will protect you against the “wiles of the devil.”

Now consider the blessing of preparation. The Lord sees the end from the beginning. He always knows where we are headed, and He always prepares us for what is coming. At BYU–Idaho living the Honor Code is a growth experience that prepares you to become a disciple-leader: a true follower of Jesus Christ and a leader in your family, in the Church, and in the community in which you live and work.

You are making decisions now that will determine how you will live your life, what your standards are going to be, where you will turn for guidance and direction, and whom you will serve. The Honor Code is there to help guide you into a life of obedience, service, and commitment to the Lord.

As you faithfully live the Honor Code, you will learn to be obedient in all things, large or small, that come from the Lord. You will see clearly how your willingness to be obedient and unselfish brings blessings to your brothers and sisters, and to yourself. You will learn to keep your commitments as a matter of personal honor and integrity.

Great blessings of growth and preparation will flow from your willing obedience to the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You will begin to feel an increase in the Savior’s approval, His love, and His trust. He will bless you with increased faith in Him and love for Him and a greater desire to do what He wants you to do. You will have the Spirit with you, and your personal spiritual strength will grow. Your understanding of what it means to serve the Lord will deepen, and your capacity to serve will increase. You will be prepared to make sacred covenants in the temple, and you will be prepared to keep them.

I want to share with you a passage from a letter I received from a BYU–Idaho student just a few weeks ago. Please note how obedience has brought blessings of protection and preparation in this student’s life:

I have just completed my first semester here at BYU-Idaho. I will be honest; I didn’t think for a second that I would have a great experience… Now that I am here in Rexburg, there is no place else I’d rather go than BYU-I.

I have come to love the Honor Code and the spirit it brings to this campus. I am so very grateful for the standards that are consistently upheld here at BYU-I. Not a day has gone by that I don’t feel the [S]pirit here. I thought I would be bothered by all of the little things, like not being able to go to class in shorts or sweats. As the semester rolled on, I noticed that all the things that I thought would make this university hard for me to attend have actually become the reasons why I love it. Following the Honor Code has strengthened my testimony and has been an instrument of missionary work in my life.

**Following the Savior: Living the Letter and the Spirit of the Honor Code**

This kind of faithful obedience follows the great example handed down to us by Adam and Eve. After they left the Garden, Adam and Eve were faithful and obedient to the commandments God gave them even though they did not fully understand their purposes. For example, when an angel appeared to Adam and asked, “Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?” Adam said, “I know not, save the Lord commanded me.”

Adam and Eve were blessed for their obedience, but the angel opened up to them a deeper understanding of the law of sacrifice and its connection to the Atonement of the Son of God:

And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.
Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.10

Adam and Eve had kept the letter of the law of sacrifice before, but now they could obey the spirit of the law. They could act in the name of Christ to offer a similitude of His atoning sacrifice, and they could receive the blessings of His Atonement by repenting and praying to God in the name of His Son.

Like Adam and Eve, you will be greatly blessed for obeying the letter of the Honor Code standards. As you faithfully obey the standards and seek greater understanding, you will discover that the spirit of the Honor Code infuses the standards with the principles of the gospel and the spiritual power of Jesus Christ. This means that when you live both the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code, you follow the Savior and He blesses you with protection and preparation.

Brothers and sisters please remember this principle: you can live the letter of the Honor Code if you follow the rules, but you can only live the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code if you follow the Savior.

I want to illustrate this principle by looking at three Honor Code standards and their deep connection to gospel principles and to the Savior. I hope you will see in these examples how to find your own deeper understanding of the commandments and standards in the Honor Code. I invite you to gain that understanding, more fully live both the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code, and enjoy the marvelous blessings of divine protection and preparation.

**Standard #1: Shorts and Flip Flops**

The most frequent question I get about the Honor Code at BYU–Idaho is our standard on shorts and flip-flops. We ask you not to wear shorts or capris on campus, including when you are walking to and from the Hart Building or the fields to work out. The same thing is true of flip-flops. They may be appropriate in other places, but not on campus.

The purpose of this standard is to help you qualify for extra spiritual help in developing a reverence for sacred things.11 The learning and teaching that take place on this dedicated campus are sacred experiences. When you live this standard, you make a small sacrifice that shows the Lord your additional respect for what happens in this special and set-apart place. This is a small thing, but the Lord has taught us that “out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”12 Your obedience in this small thing demonstrates your desire for increased spiritual blessings of sensitivity to and reverence for sacred places and sacred things. I invite you to live this standard in that spirit.

Here is a promise: If you really live the spirit of this standard, the Lord will bless you to feel the importance of sacred things. He will help you cultivate an attitude of reverence in everything you wear and everything you do in sacred places and on sacred occasions. There will grow in your heart respect, reverence, and love for Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. You will be blessed with an increased desire to hold sacred that which They have hallowed and sanctified. These gifts of reverence and love will prepare you to stand in holy places with love for the Father and the Son all through your life.

**Standard #2: Apartment Visits**

The second standard focuses on single men and women visiting in each other’s apartments. I hope it is clear to you that we encourage such visits. We want you to spend time together. However, there are guidelines at BYU–Idaho that we ask you to follow, including approved hours and no one of the opposite sex in a bedroom at any time.

The purpose of the standard is to protect you from sin and help you develop the discipline, unselfishness, self-control, and spiritual strength so important to a celestial marriage.

In His mortal ministry, the Savior powerfully affirmed the law of chastity and raised the bar of a chaste and virtuous life to our thoughts, emotions, desires, and to all our behavior, especially behavior that might lead to adultery. Listen to His words:

Behold, it is written… that thou shalt not commit adultery; But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart. Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart;13

Brothers and sisters, the Savior makes it very clear that adultery is behavior far inside Lucifer’s territory.14 The visiting standards are guideposts that mark out the zone of “righteous sociality”15 far inside the Lord’s territory and far from the zone of moral danger. We want you to avoid sexual sins that cause so much spiritual and emotional damage, but we also want you to be prepared for a wonderful marriage and a happy family life.

The sacred covenants you make with an eternal companion in the House of the Lord are commitments to “cleave unto [one another] and none else.”16 If will you live the law of chastity in your marriage, you will keep that commitment; and the deep, abiding love of a celestial union will grow and develop. You will keep lustful images or romantic thoughts of someone else out of your heart. And no attachments or involvements of any kind will ever take precedence over your commitment to your eternal companion. Living a chaste and virtuous life before and after you marry will help you develop the devotion, unselfishness, deep love, and spiritual strength of a celestial marriage. I invite you to live the visiting standard in that spirit.

Here is the promise: If you live the spirit of this standard, you will willingly live far within the Lord’s territory. The Lord will protect you from sin. He will bless you with His love and an increased desire to have a celestial marriage and an eternal family. He will prepare you to live a chaste and virtuous life, to keep your temple covenants, to be sealed to an eternal companion and to your children by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and to forge an eternal union and an eternal family through the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ.
Standard #3: Encourage Others in Their Commitment to Live the Honor Code

One of the most important elements of the Honor Code is expressed in the third standard: encourage others in their commitment to live the standards. “Encourage” means to inspire, to invite with energy, to help activate or bring to life. This standard is a call to reach out to a friend or a roommate who may be discouraged or confused about the Honor Code or may be having trouble keeping his or her commitments.

The purposes of this standard are to help you learn to love your neighbor, to save souls, and to protect and strengthen the Spirit on this campus. Those to whom you reach out will have to choose: will they “come to themselves” and turn to Christ, or will they “become for themselves” and turn away? As Jesus taught in Matthew, chapter 18, verses 15-17: “If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother [or sister]. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.”

The standard to encourage others is a standard of action, communication, and connection with others. It is a standard for teaching, testifying, expressing love and concern, and inviting others to turn to Christ. I invite you to live the standard in that spirit.

Here is the promise: If you are true to your covenants and act with faith in Christ to help your roommates and your friends, you will learn how to love your neighbor and build the kingdom of God. The gospel of Jesus Christ will be deep in your hearts; and you will help, lift, and strengthen others wherever you go. You will do it in your families with your own children. You will reach out to people who are less active, to the lost, and to the struggling. And the redeeming and strengthening power of Jesus Christ will flow into their lives and into your life and the lives of your children forever.

I will conclude with a true story that happened not long ago. The story begins with a BYU–Idaho student (I will call Jane) inviting her boyfriend into her bedroom. This happened more than once. Her roommates knew what Jane was doing, but she told them, “We just need a place to talk.”

Most of the roommates ignored what Jane was doing, but one of them, Mary, talked to Jane. Jane was upset with Mary and told her it was none of her business. Mary did not let it go. She followed Matthew, chapter 18, verses 15-17, and eventually persuaded Jane to go with her to the Student Honor Office. Jane went, but she was really upset with Mary. Jane met with a Student Honor administrator. He could tell that Jane was very angry with Mary for bringing her in, and so he asked Jane a really interesting question: “Which of your roommates do you think loves you the most—the ones who turned away or Mary who brought you here?” Jane dropped her head and began to cry. She said in her tears, “Mary is the one who loves me the most.”

That moment of tears and recognition was for Jane the beginning of “coming to herself” and turning to Christ. Many years from now when Jane is a wife and mother she will look back on the love of her roommate with overwhelming gratitude. She will think of her temple marriage, of her husband and her children, of her deep and abiding testimony of the gospel; and she will thank Heavenly Father for His plan of salvation, for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and for a roommate who reached out to her in a moment of great need.

Testimony

There are many stories like this. They are your stories—stories that teach of the deep connection between your obedience to the Honor Code and the saving doctrine and redeeming love of Jesus Christ.

You are beloved of the Lord. He knows you perfectly. He loves you. He has brought you to BYU–Idaho, and He expects great things of you. I pray that you will be obedient to Him so that in moments of decision, in times of temptation, challenge, or discouragement, you will “come to yourselves” and turn to Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. I testify of Him. I know He stands ready with open arms to forgive, to cleanse from sin, and to lift and strengthen all who come to Him.

This is the promise: if you follow the Savior and act with faith in Him to live the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code, He will protect you and prepare you to be His true disciples and receive His choicest blessings, now and forever. I know His promises are true. I know His love never fails. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.