



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO

Foundations of the Honor Code



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Ricks College Devotional, September 1, 1998

In the Path of Their Duty

Elder David A. Bednar

It is wonderful to meet with you this afternoon. To the new students, welcome to Ricks College. We are delighted to have you here on campus. To the returning students, welcome back! It is good to see you again. We look forward to a spiritually edifying and academically successful year with you.

I would prefer to say the things I want to say to you today in a one-on-one setting. Perhaps we would be seated in my office, or in a classroom, or in some other location where we could listen and talk without distractions or interruptions. The message I want to share today is very important—and is one I have been thinking about all summer. If we are to understand each other this afternoon, we will all need to participate in this devotional under the influence of the Holy Ghost. I pray for and invite the companionship of the third member of the Godhead for all of us.

Every month I am interviewed on KWBH, our student-operated radio station on campus, and I answer student call-in questions. One question I have been asked several times is this: “President, is there a particular message you would like to convey to the students who are listening?”

My answer is always the same: “*I hope the students will work and strive to understand what a privilege it is to attend Ricks College.*”

Some of you may wonder why I refer to the opportunity of being a student at Ricks as a “*privilege.*” Let me provide two major reasons why attending Ricks is a privilege.

Reason #1: Sacred tithing funds make it possible for you to be here. The price you pay for tuition and fees is only a small percentage of the actual cost of your educational experience at Ricks. Literally, the widow’s mite, contributed from faithful Church members around the world, makes it possible for you to be here at BYU–Idaho.

Reason #2: Approximately 100,000 LDS seniors graduated from high schools in North America last spring—and less than 10,000 can be admitted to a church college or university. Consequently, many worthy and capable young men and women were denied admission to Ricks and BYU.

In summary, then, attending Ricks College is both a *privilege* and a *responsibility*.

On one of my stake conference assignments several years ago, long before I knew much about or became the president of Ricks College, I stayed in the home of a good stake president. He and his wife had been blessed with eight children, and seven of those children previously had attended Ricks College. The ultimate dream of the eighth child, who was 17 years old at the time, was to attend Ricks College as her brothers and sisters had done. I was present in their home the day that last child opened the letter from the Admissions Office indicating she had been denied admission to Ricks College. This young woman was so worthy, so qualified academically, and so desirous. But there simply was not enough room that year at Ricks to accommodate all of the good young people in the Church who wanted to attend. She was so disappointed. I shall never forget the things I saw

and felt in that home that afternoon. And you should know my experience with that worthy young woman and many others like her who are not admitted into Ricks College has a significant impact on how I view you students who have been admitted into and are now attending Ricks College.

The scene I have just described was replayed in more than a thousand homes last spring as faithful and worthy young people received similar letters from our Admissions Office. Consider also that tithing paid by the families whose children were denied admission makes it possible for you to be here. Let me emphasize again—attending school at Ricks is both a *privilege* and a *responsibility*.

The major theme for my comments this afternoon is found in James 1:8. “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”¹ My objective today is to review both the doctrine and principles related to integrity and honesty. As the verse in James suggests, I am going to begin by defining the opposite of integrity.

In my study of the scriptures, I have come across four extremely interesting phrases:

- Double minded¹
- Double heart²
- Divided heart³
- Double tongued⁴

Each of these verses describes the problems and consequences associated with saying one thing and doing another—with attempting to serve two masters—with dividing our loyalty and allegiance between God and the world. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you and I think, talk, and act differently around our parents, our bishop, our teachers, and our friends?

- Do you and I have a public face and a public language that are significantly different from our private face and private language?
- Do you and I think, talk, and act differently in our classes on campus and in our church meetings on Sunday than we do in our apartments?

These questions strike at the heart of what I think the Lord intended with the phrases *double minded*, *double heart*, *divided heart*, and *double tongued*. You and I are double minded when who we really are, our thoughts, our speech, and our behavior, vary according to where we are and with whom we are associating. For example,

- a *double heart* is when a young women wears shorter skirts to church on Sunday than she does to school during the week because she is less concerned about being confronted and getting caught at Church;
- a *divided heart* is when a young man removes his earring and puts it in his pocket before entering a class and then puts it on again as quickly as he can once he leaves the classroom;
- *double minded* is signing the Honor Code and then trying to find an off-campus apartment complex where you believe the curfew will not be strictly observed—where a student thinks he or she can break a commitment and not get caught; and
- *double tongued* is partaking of the sacrament on Sunday and publicly proclaiming in a testimony meeting a desire to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost—then routinely watching “R” rated and other inappropriate movies and rationalizing that such movies are “... ok because they contain just one bad part, and I can handle it.”

In essence, then, double mindedness is hypocrisy. And the Savior and his apostles had some very sharp and stern things to say about hypocrisy and hypocrites.

Compare, if you will, the notion of double mindedness to the following verses:

And faith, hope, charity and love, with *an eye single to the glory of God*, qualify him for the work.⁵

And if *your eye be single to my glory*, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.⁶

But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. Look unto God with *firmness of mind*, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions⁷

When we have an eye single to the glory of God and are striving to align our will with His will, then we are on the way to developing the trait of integrity. In the language of the scriptures, our minds are becoming firm.

One way of defining integrity is (1) the alignment of our personal desires with the will of God and (2) a consistency of what we think, what we say, and what we do across different settings. Please note in Mosiah 4:30 the eternal significance of our thoughts, our speech, and our actions.

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your *thoughts*, and your *words*, and your *deeds*, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives,

ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.⁸

If we have integrity and are honest, then we think and speak and act the same way in front of our bishop, in front of our parents, in front of our teachers, and in front of our friends—in both public and private settings.

As a student at Ricks College, you have a remarkable opportunity to develop integrity. And two of the tools that will help you on this journey are the honor and dress codes.

Throughout the scriptures reference is made to two overarching levels of spiritual development: the preparatory level and the higher level. For example,

- the law of Moses preceded and was a preparation for the law of the gospel that the Savior taught;
- the Aaronic Priesthood precedes and is a preparation for the Melchizedek Priesthood;
- we must understand and obey the letter of the law before we can obtain the spirit of the law; and
- as Paul taught, we must first digest spiritual milk before we are ready for spiritual meat.

My dear young brothers and sisters, the honor and dress codes are not obstacles designed by out-of-touch old people to hassle you during your time on the Ricks College campus. Rather, the Honor Code *is a lesser law preparation to enter the house of the Lord and make sacred covenants, and the dress code is a lesser law preparation for how you will dress and should act after you have entered into those covenants.* If you struggle at Ricks College to obey the lesser and preparatory guidelines contained in the honor and dress codes, then may I candidly suggest that you will not be prepared to make those covenants in the temple.

If you have already entered into these sacred covenants in the temple, the honor and dress codes serve as a partial measurement of how well you are honoring and keeping those covenants. I emphasize that students who have previously entered into these covenants (returned missionaries and married students) have a particular and weighty responsibility to set a worthy example for those who are preparing and learning. As we learn in the 82nd section of the Doctrine and Covenants, “For of him unto whom much is given much is required.”⁹

All of you young men who are freshmen should look forward to serving as full-time missionaries for the Church. As you prepare to go to the temple, you will be interviewed by your bishop and stake president. One of the questions you will be asked is this: “Are you totally honest in your dealings with your fellow men?” Young men, if you consistently and willfully violate the honor and dress codes during your freshman year here, you will not be able to look your bishop and stake president in the eye and in good conscience answer “yes” to that question. Now is the time to begin preparing for that interview.

Young men and women, some of you may meet a worthy companion during this academic year and desire to enter the house of the Lord to be sealed together for time and all eternity. If you treat the lesser law preparation of the honor and dress codes with casualness and impunity, then you will have trouble answering affirmatively the honesty question from your bishop and stake president. Now is the time to begin preparing for that interview.

How you feel about and respond to the honor and dress codes are excellent indicators of how you are doing in preparing to go to the temple; they also provide powerful evidence of how well we are honoring the covenants we have already made.

Much discussion occurs on this campus about the topic of enforcing the honor and dress codes. Focus-

ing upon enforcement totally misses the issue and emphasizes a symptom of the problem rather than the root cause of the problem. The solution to this issue is really very simple. We do not need more or better enforcement. We simply need more obedience. You can read and understand these codes; that is all that should be necessary. An endless checklist of what can and cannot be done, what can and cannot be worn, is contrary to the spirit of the honor code.

Turn with me to Mosiah 4: 29. In this verse we learn that King Benjamin also was unwilling to provide an extensive checklist of do’s and don’ts for his people.

And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.¹⁰

Disobedience is the root cause of the problem. Ineffective enforcement is merely a symptom of this much larger and important problem. Enforcement is control that comes from “*outside*” of us and can never be effective. Obedience is submission to the will of God that comes from “*within*” us and brings the blessings of heaven.

Please turn with me to 2 Nephi 2:14

And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both *things to act* and *things to be acted upon*.¹¹

The question we may ask is this: What things are to act and what things are to be acted upon? The answer is found in verse 16 of the same chapter.

Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto *man* that he *should act for himself*. Wherefore, man could

not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.¹²

Men and women are to act and not be acted upon. Obedience as submission from “*within*” is acting for ourselves. Enforcement as control from “*outside*” is being acted upon.

Highlighting a similar theme, President Marion G. Romney taught:

The only safety we have in the world for our children is what they build within themselves. We can make restrictions against drinking and smoking, and we can make regulations to guide the affairs of people. We can throw all the protections possible around them, but after all, the thing that holds them in the final test is what is inside of them. They must be able to stand alone.¹³

I am convinced that students violate the honor and dress codes for two and only two reasons: (1) they either do not understand the codes, or (2) they choose to willfully rebel.

To the students who perhaps did not read and understand the codes thoroughly at the time you signed and committed to live by them, you now have the responsibility to study, understand, and live them. That is the commitment you made when you signed the honor code. I pledge that our faculty and staff will do all in our power to help you in this learning process.

To the few students who perhaps plan to willfully rebel, I invite you to go somewhere else to attend college. You will not be happy here, and you have no claim upon the resources of the Church. The place you occupy should rightfully be made available to a deserving young man or woman who will appreciate and benefit from the Spirit of Ricks.

The test of the honor and dress codes is not whether you get caught or if they are consistently enforced. The absolute test of the honor and dress codes is how a student thinks and talks and acts when no one is around to enforce the codes—when no one is checking. The question, then, is whether we will enforce in our own lives that which is ultimately unenforceable. The honor and dress codes are a lesser law test of integrity and honesty.

The honor and dress codes measure you and me, and what we may perceive as an apparent inconsistency of application or lack of enforcement does not invalidate the importance of that measurement.

You may listen to my comments and conclude that I do not believe Ricks students heed the honor and dress codes. Let me be just as clear as I can be. The overwhelming majority of our Ricks students understand what I have just described and are striving to obey the honor and dress codes with full purpose of heart. You who are so abiding these preparatory laws are described in Helaman 15:5-6:

And I would that ye should behold that *the more part of them are in the path of their duty*, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments according to the law of Moses.

Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and *they are striving with unwearied diligence* that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth; therefore there are many who do add to their numbers daily.¹⁴

As described in verse 6, we have a covenant obligation to both obey the honor and dress codes ourselves and to assist others in so living. Our objective is not to become the ultimate enforcers; rather, it is to encourage and help everyone in our community

of Saints here at Ricks College to honor and abide by our commitments.

We do not want an environment on this campus characterized by self-appointed, judgmental, and self-righteous spiritual vigilantes. We do want an environment on this campus where appropriately and genuinely concerned “*neighbors*,” in the true scriptural sense of the word neighbor, would remind, help, and encourage us to consistently think, speak, and act in a way that invites the Spirit of the Holy Ghost among us.

A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. If you came to Ricks College under false pretenses, if you were not totally honest with your bishop in your worthiness interview, you need to repent. The Holy Ghost and your bishop here on campus can help you overcome double mindedness and develop an eye single to the glory of God. Please do not wait. Please do not procrastinate the day of your repentance. Prepare yourself totally now so you can receive the blessings the Lord has in store for you while you are a student at Ricks College.

Please turn with me now to 2 Nephi 31: 10-13. In chapter 31 Nephi describes why Christ was baptized and outlines the fundamental elements of the doctrine of Christ. Beginning in verse 10:

And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?

And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved son.

And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, *acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent...*¹⁵

Note the specific reference to no hypocrisy and no deception before God. Now, notice the footnote that links the phrase “... *with real intent...*” to the topical guide. To what topic is the phrase “... *with real intent ...*” linked? Integrity. Thus, we can also read verse 13 as: “... ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with *integrity...*”

... repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.¹⁶

Brothers and sisters, we must learn to follow the Son with real intent, with true integrity, with minds that are firm, and overcome our tendency to be double-minded. Doing so will bring peace, joy, and happiness beyond description. I testify that these principles I have discussed today are true. I know that God the Eternal Father lives. I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Savior and Redeemer. And I know and witness that the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth in this latter-day dispensation through the prophet Joseph Smith. This is a living church directed by a living Savior through true apostles and prophets. These things I know, and of these things I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ James 1:8

² 1 Chronicles 12:33; Psalms 12:2

³ Hosea 10:2

⁴ JST 1 Timothy 3:88

⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 4:4; emphasis added

⁶ D&C 88:67; emphasis added

⁷ Jacob 3:1; emphasis added

⁸ Mosiah 4:30; emphasis added

⁹ D&C 82:3

¹⁰ Mosiah 4:29

¹¹ 2 Nephi 2:14; emphasis added

¹² 2 Nephi 2:16; emphasis added

¹³ Howard F. Burton, MARON G. ROMNEY: HIS LIFE AND
FAITH, pg. 153

¹⁴ Helaman 15: 5-6; emphasis added

¹⁵ 2 Nephi 31:10-13; emphasis added

¹⁶ 2 Nephi 31:13



Brigham Young University–Idaho Devotional, January 10, 2006

Out of Small Things Proceedeth That Which is Great

President Kim B. Clark

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a wonderful thing to be with you, to welcome you to a new semester at BYU–Idaho. Over the last few months, Sister Clark and I have come to know and appreciate you and the great spirit that is on this campus. This is a very special place of faith, devotion, and obedience. It is a school of inspired learning and teaching, a place where the Lord prepares true disciples and trusted servants.

I would like to talk today about principles that are central to the special character of BYU–Idaho, and central to your lives now, and to the glorious future that awaits you. These principles are laid out in a beautiful and powerful way in the 64th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.¹

In these short verses the Lord teaches principles that have profound implications for you and for me.

Well-doing occurs through small things; great things come from small things. It is natural to grow weary

in doing small things; but if we give our hearts and minds to the Lord, we will not grow weary, we will do the small things that make great things happen, and we will build Zion.

I would like to focus today on how small things bring about that which is great, and what it means to give our hearts and minds to the Lord. I want to apply these principles to BYU–Idaho and, specifically, to the Honor Code.

SMALL TO GREAT: TWO PATTERNS

In the scriptures there are two patterns of the principle that small things lead to great things. In the first pattern, the Lord's work gets done in small miracles and simple acts of kindness, service, and obedience sustained over long periods of time. Alma taught this pattern and the principle to his son Helaman in the 37th chapter of Alma. Speaking of the brass plates, Alma said:

... behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth con-found the wise.

And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes....²

This principle is at work all around us. We grow personally and the kingdom grows through small things

sustained. There are many examples: an act of kindness, an invitation to church, a word of testimony, a family prayer, an inspired verse. Sustained over time, these become a source of great power and influence for righteousness and good.

It is also true, however, that this principle works in the other direction as well. Small acts of disobedience or meanness, sustained over time, lead to great evil and destruction. This we also know. Listen to Nephi's description of Satan and his evil designs:

... and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

... until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.³

The chains of hell do not come clanking down around us in one fell swoop. They come softly, quietly, in lulling whispers, and deadening flattery, a little wickedness at a time. But if sustained, small wicked things lead to great evil.

There is a second pattern of small things leading to great things, less talked about, perhaps less well understood. And yet it, too, is in operation all around us. In this second pattern small things lead to great things quite suddenly, even dramatically. Let me illustrate this pattern with two diagrams.

The first diagram simulates the number of people who would die from a deadly, infectious disease in a population. The disease grows very slowly, but persistently. Then, when the number of infected people gets to a critical point, the number who die increases dramatically and we have a full-fledged epidemic.

The second diagram depicts the number of deaths in Kansas in October of 1918 during the worldwide flu epidemic. Here, in an actual epidemic, we see the same pattern—slow development when the disease

first hits and then a dramatic increase once the disease gets to a critical point.

This dramatic effect on the population depicted here comes about because of small things—a little virus; a few people who transmit it; the few contact others, and they in turn contact a few more until many have been infected. It is also small things that can stop the disease: reduce the number of contacts people have; isolate those we know are infected; wash hands; don't gather in large meetings in closed places, and so forth.

The epidemic pattern—small things producing large, dramatic effects—shows up in many other contexts. It is what lies behind fashion and fads in music and entertainment, dress and grooming, and other aspects of social behavior. I first ran into this personally in the mid-1950s in the form of the Hula Hoop. It seemed like almost overnight otherwise mature and sane people were buying plastic hoops and gyrating everywhere. Today, you can find this pattern all around you, if you look. Why, for example, would anyone who is not a catcher on a baseball team wear a baseball cap backwards? It probably started in some obscure place by someone now long forgotten. But that social behavior has swept across society, affecting millions of people.

This pattern of dramatic change produced by small things is a pattern we see over and over again in the Book of Mormon. We find a description of a people descending into wickedness. It begins with small things, like the wearing of expensive clothes, and pride in "... all manner of precious things ..."⁴ and gossip, and unkind words. Also, "... the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, *that they began to be scornful, one towards another...*"⁵

Later in verse 11 Mormon tells us that wickedness in the Church led "... unbelievers on *from one piece*

of iniquity to another, thus bringing on the destruction of the people.”⁶ This great wickedness did not happen all at once. It began with small things, but these small things grew into great evil in the space of a single year.

We find this same pattern repeated many times. In the book of Helaman chapters 3 and 4, in Helaman chapter 6, in 3 Nephi chapter 6, we read of wonderful periods of prosperity and righteousness followed by a decline into wickedness that begins with small things. Describing the power of small things, Mormon writes that wickedness “... did grow upon them from day to day”⁷ until it hit a critical point and then, in just a few months, great evil almost exploded into the society.

The Book of Mormon also shows us how these epidemics of wickedness and evil may be stopped. Some are stopped by war and great destruction. But in some, intervention by the prophets of God works through small things to bring about great and dramatic repentance and righteousness, also in a very short time. (See, for example, Helaman 5:50-52.)

I believe that Mormon included so many of these stories of the power of small things for a very good reason. He saw our day and knew of the forces that would be at work on us in our time. We live in a day when changes in fashion and fads in dress and grooming, in music and entertainment, and social behavior of all kinds happen very quickly. Moreover, the media through which all of this occurs is very powerful. Satan uses these forces in our day to wreak havoc in our society, and thus bring about great evil. The Lord inspired Mormon to teach us these principles that we might be warned and forewarned. The Lord also has given us the admonition in the revelation we started with today: be not weary in well-doing. Well-doing can stop the spread of the small things that lead to great evil. And it lays the foundation for great righteousness.

Which brings me to BYU–Idaho and the Honor Code. The principles we have discussed are at work on this campus. The Honor Code includes many things that we might describe as great: honesty and integrity, avoiding pornography, living the law of chastity, and the Word of Wisdom, indeed, the gospel of Jesus Christ. But it also contains many rules against things that we might describe as small: flip-flops; curfew; torn or ragged jeans; long sideburns; shorts and capris; form-fitting tops and pants and other immodest styles; beards; “underwear styles” of clothing; and much else. Some of you may wonder why we have such small things in the Honor Code.

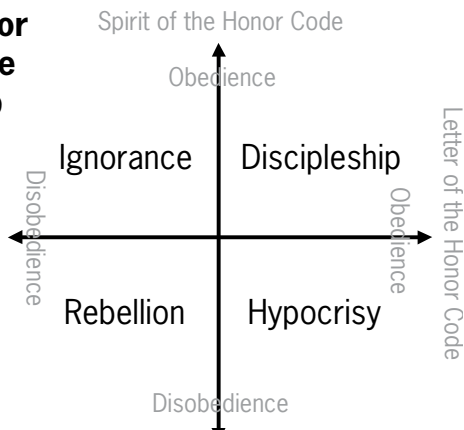
It is true that flip-flops and an unshaven face are not big things. But it is just like the stories of pride and greed in the Book of Mormon: failure to do the small things can, in a short period of time, lead to failure on the big things. The principle is so very clear: obedience to the *small* things creates a spirit of obedience in *all* things, and thus protects against evil and invites the blessings of heaven. Following the rules about the small things establishes a great spirit of obedience on the campus. It creates a context of respect for learning and for the university that encourages a spirit of order and reverence. In that context of obedience and reverence and order, the Holy Ghost can minister on this campus. These blessings come to you individually and to us as a community.

This is why we have such seemingly small things in the Honor Code. This is why such a small thing like wearing flip-flops on campus or going to class with a little beard or breaking curfew is so deadly. This is why if you are on campus and discover that you have on flip-flops, or realize you have not shaved, the images of the great destruction in the Book of Mormon should come to mind. You should immediately think to yourself: my small act of disobedience is opening a crack in the great protective power of the Honor Code. I am personally in great danger; and if everyone behaved like me, the community

would be in peril. And then you should immediately turn around, go back to your apartment, repenting as you go, and change your shoes, or shave, and come back living both the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code.

This is also why if you ever hear sarcastic words coming out of your mouth like: “So, what are you, the Honor Code Nazi?” or “Why are you so dressed up?” or any other words of scorn and ridicule directed at your classmates who are living the Honor Code, you should immediately recall the words of Mormon, repent on the spot, apologize to them, and ask their forgiveness.

Honor Code Map



Because of its importance and its power in this community and in your life, I invite you to take a personal inventory of your relationship to the Honor Code. In order to help you do this, I have prepared what I call the Honor Code Map. The first dimension of the map is obedience to the letter of the Honor Code, represented by the horizontal line. In the middle of the line, I have marked the boundary between obedience on the right and disobedience on the left. The second dimension of the map is the spirit of the Honor Code, represented by the vertical line. Above the horizontal line are those who live the spirit of the Honor Code; below the line are those who do not. These two dimensions establish the four

quadrants of the Honor Code Map. As I explain each one, I want you to reflect on your own situation. I want you to ask yourself: Where am I in the map, and where am I going?

Let’s begin in the upper left-hand quadrant. Students in this part of the map live the spirit, but not the letter of the Honor Code. How is that possible? I believe this occurs when students desire to do what is right, but do not know about or do not understand the standards. I will call this quadrant the Zone of Ignorance. If you think you might be in this zone, I encourage you to get educated. Go and read the Honor Code carefully. There are many people who will help you. The Zone of Ignorance is not a good place to be.

Moving counterclockwise, we come to the lower left-hand quadrant. Here are students who live neither the letter, nor the spirit of the Honor Code. This is the Zone of Rebellion. Students in this zone know the standards, and yet choose to willfully rebel against them. If you are in this zone, I invite you to do one of two things. Number 1: repent and get out of the zone; in other words, change your ways. You will find many around you willing to help you and support you, including your bishop and the Lord. If you are in the Zone of Rebellion and do not want to change, I invite you to do Number 2: attend another university. If you are in rebellion against the Honor Code and if you persist in that rebellion, this is not the university for you. You have no right to be here, and there are many worthy students who would like to take your place. It is not good to be in the Zone of Rebellion.

The lower right-hand quadrant is next. In this zone, students are in compliance with the letter of the Honor Code, but they do not live its spirit. Their hearts are not in it. I call this the Zone of Hypocrisy. Students in this zone often live near the edge of compliance. They don’t want to be in violation, but they often get as close as they can without going over the

line. While it is better to be in compliance than not, it is not good to be in the Zone of Hypocrisy. Such students have "... a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."⁸ And with that denial, students lose the protection and blessings they might have had. The Zone of Hypocrisy is not a good place to be.

The last quadrant is the one we all should strive to be in. I call this quadrant the Zone of Discipleship. I am happy to say that the vast majority of students are in this quadrant.

Students in the Zone of Discipleship are in compliance with the letter of the Honor Code, and they live its spirit as well. Some, in the lower part of the zone, are at an early stage of their discipleship and are working to live its principles more fully. As they do so, they travel the Path of Discipleship. The same is true of those who take my invitation to get out of the Zones of Ignorance, or Rebellion, or Hypocrisy. All students who seek to increase in obedience to the letter and to the spirit of the Honor Code travel the Path of Discipleship. They see the connection between the small things and the things that are great. They understand the importance of obedience, and they see the Honor Code as a preparation for the higher laws and covenants the Lord desires to give them.

GIVING OUR HEARTS AND MINDS TO THE LORD

It is my deep hope that all of you will move forward on the Path of Discipleship. Living the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code requires vigilance and diligence and obedience. One of the biggest challenges is exactly what the Lord warned us about in the 64th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: we grow "... weary in well-doing..."⁹ There are always temptations to let the Honor Code slide, even if only a little bit. It may be tempting to break curfew just a little bit; to have your girlfriend or boyfriend in your bedroom so you can talk privately for just a little while; to copy that one small paragraph from the Internet and present it as your own; to let your

beard grow on the weekends; to wear that stylish but low-cut sweater on Saturday night. It may seem easier to dress down, to not shave, to slip on the flip-flops like an old habit, to wear that old ragged pair of jeans that are so comfortable.

The solution to this problem is also exactly what the Lord said it was: to give our hearts to Him. So, what exactly does this mean, to give our hearts to the Lord? I would like to close today with an answer to that question, in the hope that you will see and understand the connection between living the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code and giving your heart to the Lord.

Throughout the scriptures when the prophets talk about our relationship to the Lord, they often use the image of the heart to capture something deep and profound in our very nature. Physically, the heart pumps blood throughout the body, bringing life-giving oxygen and nutrients to every part of us. It is there in the quiet times, even when we are asleep. It is there when we are active, giving us whatever we need. We can feel it, and hear it, beating away, giving us life.

For all of these reasons, the prophets have used the image of the heart to capture what is at the very core of our emotional and spiritual life—our innermost desires, our central drives, our deepest emotional commitments, and our capacity for love. Like the physical heart that delivers life-giving blood to every part of us, the metaphorical heart delivers life-giving motivation and emotional energy and commitment to what we are and what we do. This is what we must give to the Lord—our deepest commitments, our innermost desires—if we are not to be weary in well-doing.

The word commitment is crucial here. We give our hearts to the Lord through the covenants we make with Him. Paul teaches us that the promises we make to our Heavenly Father are not just words

written on paper, or even on plates of gold, or on tablets of stone. If those promises are to be the foundation of our discipleship, they must be written in our hearts. To the Corinthian disciples, Paul said, "... ye are... the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart."¹⁰

Speaking of the new and everlasting covenant of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts...."¹¹

I want you to look very carefully at the words in that verse. When we give our hearts to the Lord, He writes the covenants and the promises in our heart. Through the power of the Spirit, those promises become our deepest commitments and the motivating force in our lives. When we repent and come to Him in humility, seeking His forgiveness, we come to Him with hearts that are broken. Through the ordinance of baptism, and through its renewal each week in the sacrament, we express our willingness to take upon ourselves His name and we promise to keep His commandments and always remember Him. The Lord changes our hearts through the power of the Atonement and the ministry of the Holy Ghost. What was there before is changed through His mercy and grace and power. This mighty change of heart comes as He writes the new covenant and His new promises there. Our hearts become His, because He makes our hearts anew.

That marvelous, miraculous process is not a one-time event. All throughout our lives the Lord gives us opportunities to grow and change through our covenants to become like Him. After baptism come the blessings of the priesthood, and the temple, and eternal marriage, and the creation of an eternal family. In all of this, there will be higher covenants and

more powerful promises written in our hearts, if we are true and faithful.

This process of giving your heart to the Lord is the great key to understanding the purpose of the Honor Code and its place in your life. The Honor Code is a preparatory commitment to live the gospel and conduct your lives in a spirit of obedience. It not only protects against evil and invites the blessings of heaven here and now, but it will help you to prepare to live the higher law. In that spirit of preparation, you not only need to live the letter, but also the spirit of the Honor Code. You need to be in the Zone and on the Path of Discipleship. For that to happen, the Honor Code needs to get into your heart. Don't let it be just a set of rules written on paper or on the Web that you have to live to be in good standing in this university. I pray that you may give your heart to the Lord and see and feel the Honor Code as a blessing, as a source of strength and protection and a preparatory gateway to the marvelous blessings of the new and everlasting covenant that the Lord desires to give you.

In these higher covenants we promise all that we have or might have to the Lord and His work. We promise all that we are or might become to our eternal companion. There is no room there for a partial or halfhearted commitment. There is no place in these eternal covenants for living at the edge of obedience. The Lord will have all of you, all of your heart, all of your might, all of your mind, and all of your will. But His promise to you is likewise all encompassing; if you are true and faithful to those covenants, you will be endowed with power from on high; you will be joint heirs with Christ; you will receive all that the Father has. Can you understand it? Can you begin to comprehend it?

Please turn with me to the 78th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and listen to the words of the Lord given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. As I read,

apply what is said to yourselves and the Honor Code in this university:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for *I will lead you along*. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.

And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more.¹²

My brothers and sisters, these promises are yours. Through your faithful obedience you really are laying the foundation of a great work. Small things really do matter. Out of small things proceedeth that which is great. May God our Father bless you to see and know of the power of small things. And may you give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that if you do, you will be of good cheer as He leads you along in love and peace on the Path of Discipleship. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ Doctrine and Covenants 64:33-34

² Alma 37:6-7

³ 2 Nephi 28:21-22

⁴ Alma 4:6

⁵ Alma 4:8; emphasis added

⁶ Alma 4:11; emphasis added

⁷ Helaman 3:36

⁸ Joseph Smith History 1:19

⁹ D&C 64:33

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:3

¹¹ Hebrews 8:10

¹² D&C 78:17-19, emphasis added



Brigham Young University–Idaho Devotional, September 5, 2006

God Hath Prepared a More Excellent Way

President Kim B. Clark

Brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be with you on another great day at BYU–Idaho. I welcome you to a new semester. I pray that the Holy Ghost will be with you and with me as I speak today, that I may share with you the things of my heart.

Sister Clark and I have been here now for a little over a year. We love this university, we love you, and we love the Lord and His work. When you come to this university and begin to experience the Spirit of Ricks, you inherit a legacy of faith, courage, devotion, sacrifice, and heavenly power. I would like to begin my talk today by showing you a very important part of that legacy.

Video: <http://streaming.byui.edu/presentations/wagonbox.wmv>

“Seeds to the wind”—I love those words and what they mean! I pray with all my heart that each of you, like those faithful pioneers, will fulfill that marvelous and sacred responsibility and become true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is what I want to talk about today.

To begin, let’s turn to Doctrine and Covenants, section 59, verse 4. After promising His true disciples the blessings of the earth, the Lord said:

And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with *commandments not a few*, and with revelations in their time—they that are faithful and diligent before me.¹

The Lord promises His disciples great blessings, including “commandments not a few.” This phrase, “commandments not a few,” contains important insights about the nature of discipleship and what we must do to become true disciples of the Savior.

The Lord’s disciples are obedient to the commandments given to all members of the Church. But in this passage the Lord refers to commandments that are very personal and specific. Elder David A. Bednar described these personal commandments this way:

... it is an even greater thing to receive and respond to the individual, private, and personally revealed commandments that result from continual and faithful obedience.

... The individual and personal “commandments not a few” we receive frequently tend to focus upon the good things we can and should do to develop and deepen our discipleship....²

In order to “develop and deepen our discipleship,” we must address what I would like to call our personal bar of righteousness, the personal standard that guides our daily activity. The Lord has given us the gospel, the Holy Ghost, the scriptures, and living prophets to help us set that personal bar. The commandments of the Lord that apply to all of us—I have in mind commandments like the law of chastity, tithing, the Word of Wisdom—define what we might think of as a baseline standard. If our personal bar

Word of Wisdom or do other things that sin against the laws of God, we need to raise our personal bar, repent of our sins, and change our ways.

But the raising of our personal bar must not stop at the baseline standard. Elder Henry B. Eyring said this about raising the personal bar of righteousness:

Now, all this has some practical applications for each of us....

You can set the bar for yourself a little higher and then a little higher, again and again.

For instance, you returned missionaries can set your goal not to maintain the spirituality you felt in the mission field, but to rise higher.... it is your responsibility to set the bar higher for yourself, not once, but again and again.

That is true for all of us, not just for those who have been missionaries.³

The Lord wants us to move forward on the path of discipleship and become like Him. And so He sends us promptings and impressions to raise our personal bar, over and over again. The impressions that come may be about fasting with a purpose, or forgiving one who has hurt us, or sharing the gospel, or searching the scriptures more diligently, or being more thoughtful and kind to neighbors and friends, or praying with real intent. They will be what the Lord wants you to do to become a stronger, more effective disciple. And they will not come just once. If you are true and faithful, they will come all through your life.

This is the path of discipleship: to receive personal “commandments not a few,” to raise the personal bar, again and again, to become a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me share with you some thoughts about the nature of that path and then some practical ideas about what you can do to raise your personal bar of righteousness. As I do so, I would like you to be especially attentive to the whisperings of the Spirit that will come to you. I pray that as I speak, the Holy Ghost will teach you where you need to raise your personal bar. Please write down the impressions that come; they will be some of your very own “commandments not a few.”

THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP

Of the many aspects of the path of discipleship, I want to focus today on three. As we examine them together, please consider how they apply in your life.

1. *Progress on the path occurs line upon line, precept by precept.*

Progress on the path of discipleship is a journey of steps, not leaps and bounds. As disciples of the Lord, we learn precept upon precept and line upon line. We raise the personal bar a notch at a time.

Those steps are not easy. Indeed, Elder Eyring has taught us that the way to discipleship lies uphill:

The Lord is anxious to lead us to the safety of higher ground, away from the path of physical and spiritual danger. His upward path will require us to climb. My mother used to say to me when I complained that things were hard, “If you are on the right path, it will always be uphill.”⁴

The path of discipleship is not the easy way, nor the broad road. It is strait and narrow, and it goes uphill. That is why Nephi admonishes us to “. . . press forward with a steadfastness in Christ . . .”⁵ and why there is so much talk of enduring to the end in the scriptures. We endure, we press forward, step by step.

2. Faith precedes the miracle.

Each step on the path, each raising of the personal bar, is an act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Although the Lord promises us great blessings, they do not come until we have taken action. Listen carefully to the words of Moroni:

And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; 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.⁶

This passage makes clear that we realize the blessings of heaven and earth *after* the trial of our faith, *after* we do His will,⁷ *after* we continue in His word.⁸ This is true even when the promptings we get to raise the personal bar appear to require what may seem like miraculous changes: the painfully shy young brother prompted by the Spirit to open his mouth and share the gospel; the “night person” young sister prompted by the Spirit to get up early and study the scriptures. When such a prompting comes, we might think: “Oh, Lord, take away my shyness and I will speak,” or “Oh, Lord, wake me up in the morning and I will study.” But that is not how things work on the path of discipleship. The Lord says to us: “Act, and I will strengthen you. Speak, and I will make your words strong. Awake and study, and I will inspire you.” These are miracles, but they come only after we have acted in faith.

But they do come. I bear witness to you, my brothers and sisters, they come. The path of discipleship is a path of miracles. It is the Lord’s path; and through the power of His atonement, we may receive whatever we need to become His true disciples. Our responsibility is to act with faith in Him. Faith precedes the miracle.

3. The path of discipleship is not about you; it is about the Lord and His work; it is about service and love.

When you feel a personal prompting to raise the bar, it is only natural to focus initially on yourself—what *you* need to do, what the prompting means for *you*. But those promptings are not just about you. They come to help you love and serve one another. They come to help you do the Lord’s work.

With those promptings, the Lord invites you to “[t]ake my yoke upon you, and learn of me . . .⁹ and He commands, “. . . the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do . . .”¹⁰ Christ is the Great Exemplar. In His perfect life of love and service, we find both our model and our strength. Let’s turn to John, chapter 15, and read what Jesus taught the Apostles about this principle:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.¹¹

Jesus Christ is the true source—the true vine—of life-giving power and strength. Through the redeeming, magnifying power of His atonement, we may bear fruit and become His disciples as we learn to love and serve others as He loves and serves us. That is why He gives us personal “commandments not a few.”

His life—a life of selfless sacrifice; a life dedicated to the will of the Father; a life of never-failing love; a

life of service, always seeking to bless, heal, comfort, lift up, and strengthen—that life is our model. The path of discipleship is a path of love.

When you receive a prompting to raise the personal bar, listen very carefully to the Spirit and the Lord will show you how acting on that prompting will help you bless those around you. When you act on that prompting, He will bless you to do His work, to be of service, and to love His children. When you see Him working in the lives of His children through you, as He surely will, remember to thank Him and honor Him and praise His name. It is not about you.

THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP AT BYU–IDAHO

What I have said today about the path of discipleship and raising your personal bar will apply to you throughout your lives. But I would now like to say a word about discipleship and your time in this university. I want to consider with you today three opportunities to raise your personal bar: serving in the ward, learning in the classroom, and living the Honor Code.

1. *Serving in the Ward*

The wards on this campus present each of you with wonderful opportunities for service. When you are called to serve in your ward, accept that responsibility and magnify it. As an example, let me address the home teachers among us today: Brethren, each month home teachers are to visit the people assigned to them, bring the Spirit into their homes, share a message based on the First Presidency’s article in the *Ensign*, and pray with them. This is the baseline standard. You cannot magnify your calling as a home teacher unless you *do* your home teaching. That means visiting *each* person or family *every* month. But that is only the beginning. If you will remember those you teach in your personal prayers, the Spirit may prompt you to tailor your message to help

them with a problem or to take some action to help them beyond the monthly visit. As you ponder and pray about your assignment and get out and do your home teaching, you will be blessed “with revelations in their time” and the Lord will work through you to bless the lives of the people you teach. Of that I have a strong personal witness.

Magnifying your calling as a home teacher at BYU–Idaho is an act of faith and love. It is an essential step in your journey to become a true disciple of the Savior.

Sisters, you have similar opportunities in visiting teaching. Brothers and sisters, make home or visiting teaching a priority in your lives. Listen to the promptings of the Spirit, and raise your personal bar for home and visiting teaching by magnifying this sacred calling.

2. *Learning in the Classroom*

The Lord has commanded us to “seek learning by study, and also by faith.” An important part of the mission of BYU–Idaho is to help you fulfill that commandment in a very powerful way, now and throughout your life. Our classrooms will be a wonderful source of insight and new knowledge for you, but how well they work will depend very much on you. Where you set your personal bar for learning by study and by faith will have a profound impact on your education and on the education of those around you. Here are two things you can do to raise your personal bar.

First, always come to class prepared to be taught and to teach. Always do the assigned reading or the problems—before class. Think about what you have done and be ready to explain what you have learned and what you think. Always pray before class that you will have the Holy Ghost with you to teach you and guide you and help you contribute.

Second, be on time for class. Being chronically late to class is a sign of disrespect and selfishness. It disrupts the class and hurts other people. We are building a Zion university at BYU–Idaho, and being on time and being prepared are important. In Zion, people come prepared and they come on time. No one is late and unprepared in Zion. In Zion, we “teach one another.” And you cannot do that if you are late and unprepared. When you come to class prepared and on time, you are serving the Lord and everyone in the class. That means your personal preparation and attendance are acts of faith, humility, kindness, service, and love.

Brothers and sisters, please listen to the Spirit and, under the Lord’s direction, prayerfully raise your personal bar for learning by study and by faith. You will help to build Zion, and you will take important steps on the path of discipleship.

3. *Living the Honor Code*

The Honor Code establishes rules and standards for behavior and dress and grooming for everyone at BYU–Idaho. The written Honor Code is the baseline standard. It is the letter of the law. The spirit of the Honor Code is the spirit of love, service, and willing obedience. The grand purposes of the Honor Code—letter and spirit—are to foster in your life and on this campus a great spirit of consecration, to protect against evil, to invite the ministry of the Holy Ghost, to help us build Zion, and to help you prepare to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To live both the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code, you must know the baseline standards, understand their purposes, and listen to the Spirit. When you heed the promptings of the Spirit to raise your personal bar for living the Honor Code, you not only grow in your discipleship, but you also bless the lives of those around you. Let me give you an example. Each area of the Honor Code is important, but today I want to focus on the dress and grooming

standards and, in particular, what you wear every day to class.

I have noticed, for example, that jeans and T-shirts are the daily wardrobe of choice for many of you. If they are modest, not too short, not tight fitting, not torn or ragged, do not have holes in them, and do not have inappropriate messages on them, then jeans and T-shirts meet the baseline standard of the Honor Code. But as you reflect on your personal bar, listen to these words from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland:

... choose your clothing the way you would choose your friends—in both cases choose that which improves you and would give you confidence standing in the presence of God. Good friends would never embarrass you, demean you, or exploit you. Neither should your clothing.

... from ancient times to modern we have always been invited to present our best selves inside and out when entering the house of the Lord—and a dedicated LDS chapel [*and I would add, the Lord’s university*] is a “house of the Lord.” Our clothing or footwear need never be expensive, indeed should not be expensive, but neither should it appear that we are on our way to the beach.... We should be recognizable in appearance as well as in behavior that we truly are disciples of Christ, that in a spirit of worship we are meek and lowly of heart, that we truly desire the Savior’s Spirit to be with us always.¹²

Every time you walk into a classroom on this campus, you are walking into a space that has been dedicated and set apart by the prophets of God. This is the Lord’s university, a temple of learning, a disciple preparation center. When you look in the mirror in the morning before you walk on this campus, say to yourself: “I want to be a disciple of the Savior;

disciple of the Savior today.” If it is a devotional day, dress in your temple best. On other days remember who you are and wear clothes that are a notch or two up from jeans and T-shirts.

Now, you may wonder why what you wear is important. After all, the Lord has said, “... man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”¹³ I want your hearts to be pure and your faith to be true, but I think there are two reasons why what you wear to class is important. First, like being on time, it is a sign of your respect for the process of learning and teaching that occurs in those dedicated places. It is a measure of your respect for everyone involved in that process—including your classmates, the faculty, and especially the Holy Ghost.

Second, what you wear affects how you and those around you behave. Simply said, your dress will affect how you and your classmates engage in the learning process and how much you learn. If you come to class better dressed, you will help to establish a sense of respect, seriousness of purpose, and focus that will affect how the class works. Through your obedience and through raising your personal bar, you will bring a better spirit to class and help to create an environment in which the Holy Ghost can minister, not only to you, but everyone around you. This means that raising your personal bar for dress and grooming is not just about you. It is an act of faith, kindness, service, and love for those around you. It is a powerful step on the path of discipleship.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

Brothers and sisters, I have talked much today about practical things—some would say, mundane things. But it is with the practical, mundane threads of your daily life that you weave the tapestry of discipleship. God really is in the details. And it is in the details of your daily life that you will find opportunities to raise your personal bar.

As you saw earlier in the video, those faithful Saints who settled this valley built the kingdom and this school in the hardship of their daily lives. It was there, in the toil and heartache, hunger and cold, that they pressed forward in faith. Their faith, their courage, their devotion, their discipleship is your legacy and your inspiration. I hope and pray that the desire to become a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ will burn in each of your hearts. I hope you will pray for guidance, listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, and raise your personal bar of righteousness. My dear brothers and sisters, the path of discipleship is the only path to life and salvation. It is the path described by Moroni when he said, “... in the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way...”¹⁴ In the more excellent way we may, in the words of Mormon, “... lay hold upon every good thing ... [for] in Christ there should come every good thing.”¹⁵

I know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the way. This is His church and kingdom restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Everything we need to become His true disciples has been restored. It is all here. The path is open; the way is clear. And Christ Himself bids you to come. He will show you what you need to do to walk the more excellent way, and He will help you do it. That direction and support will come step by step, line upon line. Your acts of faith will precede the miracle, but the miracles will come. Brothers and sisters, I testify that the miracles will come as you forget yourself in the service of the Lord. Mormon described one of those miracles in Moroni 7:48:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with [the pure love of Christ], which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of His Son, Jesus Christ....¹⁶

You will experience the pure love of Christ on the path of discipleship. I know that is true. As you walk

the path, pushing uphill, raising your personal bar again and again, you will become a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will experience His power and grace, and He will bless you to love as He loves. And so, from the depths of my own experience, I bear testimony of these things and leave you my witness in the words of Moroni:

And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever...¹⁷

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ D&C 59:4, emphasis added

² David A. Bednar, “In a State of Happiness,” Brigham Young University–Idaho Devotional, January 6, 2004

³ Henry B. Eyring, “Raise the Bar,” Brigham Young University–Idaho Devotional, January 25, 2005

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ 2 Nephi 31:20

⁶ Ether 12:6

⁷ John 7:17

⁸ John 8:31–32

⁹ Matthew 11:29

¹⁰ 3 Nephi 27:21

¹¹ John 15:1, 5, 8, 12

¹² Jeffrey R. Holland, “To Young Women,” *Ensign*, November 2005, 28

¹³ 1 Samuel 16:7

¹⁴ Ether 12:11

¹⁵ Moroni 7:20, 22

¹⁶ Moroni 7:48

¹⁷ Ether 12:41



Brigham Young University–Idaho Devotional, January 9, 2007

A Chaste and Virtuous Life

The Power of the Law of Chastity

President Kim B. Clark and Sue L. Clark

We welcome you to a new semester at BYU–Idaho. To those of you who have just joined the university, we offer a special word of welcome. To all of you, we express our love. It is a joy to serve with you in this great university.

We stand together today because we want to talk to you about things that are very sacred and intimate. We want to share with you our deepest feelings about what it means to live a chaste and virtuous life. We pray that the Holy Ghost will attend us today that we might speak, and you might hear, through the power of the Spirit.

The Lord’s command for us to live a chaste and virtuous life is rooted in the fundamental doctrines of salvation. From the beginning of time Heavenly Father has commanded His children to be chaste, to seek virtue, and to use the sacred powers of procreation only within the bonds of marriage between a man and a woman. In our day the prophets and apostles have issued the proclamation on the family—a great clarion call to know, understand, and live these basic truths. Listen carefully to the words of the proclamation:

We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.

In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life.¹

We are children of God. As Paul taught the Romans, we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”² Through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and through obedience to His commandments, we may inherit eternal life—to know our Heavenly Father, to live with our eternal companion and our eternal family in His presence, to enjoy all that He enjoys.

Each of us, our eternal companions and our eternal families, are at the very center of Heavenly Father’s plan. He loves us and desires to bless us with joy in this life and to prepare us for eternal life in the world to come. That is why He has given us His power to create mortal life and to lay the foundation of an eternal family here on earth. We must learn to use that power righteously in this fallen world.

The testing and probing of mortal life are not easy. The world is full of sickness, pain, and infirmities of

all kinds. Satan is loose in the earth doing everything he can to destroy us.

But we are not alone. When Heavenly Father gives us the power to create life, He also gives us a marvelous commandment—the law of chastity—that stands as a great shining light, a beacon of hope and strength, a bright line of guidance and direction. If we learn to live not only the letter but also the spirit of that law, it will be a source of strength and a cherished blessing in our lives.

We would like to talk with you today about four aspects of the law of chastity: (1) What the law is. (2) The law of chastity as protection against the forces of evil. (3) The law of chastity as preparation for marriage and an eternal family. (4) The miracle of forgiveness and the blessings of heaven that come to those who live a chaste and virtuous life.

THE LAW OF CHASTITY

We begin with what the law of chastity is. In every age and time our Heavenly Father has spoken forcefully and clearly about the creation of mortal life in the personal, intimate relationship between husband and wife. So it is in our day.

Here, again, are words from the proclamation:

The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the

sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.³

The power to create mortal life is sacred. It is Heavenly Father's power; and all the emotions, desires, and feelings associated with that sacred power come from Him. Using that power within the bonds of marriage gives expression to the love, joy, and unity of husband and wife and brings children to an eternal family. The word of the Lord is unmistakable: Anyone who uses those sacred powers outside of marriage commits a sin so serious that the prophets have called it "an abomination." When his son Corianton left the ministry and went after the harlot Isabel, Alma told his son:

Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?⁴

The sin of adultery desecrates God's own sacred powers. It is a sin against God. Further, our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Christ came to earth and died and suffered so that we could obtain these bodies now and in eternity. Adultery is a sin against Christ. It is a sin against all that is divine and holy—against sacred covenants, against the Redeemer and Savior, against our Father in Heaven. It is "an abomination in the sight of the Lord."

"Thou shalt not commit adultery"⁵ rings out in the Ten Commandments and in the words of prophet after prophet in the scriptures. But the law of chastity extends the mandate for virtue and holiness to our thoughts, emotions, desires, and to behavior that might lead to adultery. Listen to the words of the Savior to the people of Nephi:

Behold, it is written by them of old time, 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;

For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.⁶

This is the law of chastity. It is a higher law. If you imagine a chain that begins with immoral thoughts and images, continues to intimate behavior that acts on those thoughts, leading ultimately to adultery, the law of chastity applies to all of it. When the Lord says we should “suffer none of these things to enter into [our] heart[s],” he is commanding us to not let immoral images or thoughts of immoral behavior take root in our hearts where they become fantasies, even plans and obsessions full of lust. He further warns us against any intimate relations outside of marriage that stimulate desires and emotions in ourselves or others that could lead to adultery. In the law of chastity the Lord commands us against that whole chain.

Listen carefully to the words of modern prophets about such behavior. First, Elder Richard G. Scott:

Strongly tied to the sacred, private parts of the body are powerful emotions intended to be used within the covenant of marriage between a man and woman in ways that are appropriate and acceptable to them both.... These emotions are not to be stimulated or used for personal gratification outside of the covenant of marriage. Do not touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body to stimulate those emotions. Do not allow anyone to do that with you, with or without clothing. Do not arouse those

emotions in your own body. These things are wrong. Do not do them.⁷

Now listen to the words of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland:

Souls. Symbols. Sacraments. Do these words suggest why human intimacy is such a serious matter? Why it is so right and rewarding, so stunningly beautiful when it is within marriage and approved of God... and so blasphemously wrong—like unto murder—when it is outside such a covenant? It is my understanding that we park and pet and sleep over and sleep with at the peril of our very lives...⁸

Through the law of chastity the Lord calls upon each of us to live lives of virtue and purity—pure in the thoughts and desires of our hearts and pure in our behavior. We pray that you will embrace the law and live it. We bear witness that if you do, the Lord’s richest blessings—blessings of protection and preparation—will be yours.

THE PROTECTION OF THE LAW

The law of chastity is a great protection in a world of increasing wickedness and immorality. Nephi saw our day and warned us of Satan’s many tactics: stirring up some hearts unto anger; pacifying, flattering, and whispering to other hearts until he leads “them away carefully down to hell.”⁹

Nephi’s prophecy is in fulfillment before our very eyes. On television, in movies, in music, on the Internet, in popular media of all kinds, “conspiring men”¹⁰ with evil designs dress up adultery, immorality, wickedness, and pornography as fun, hip, cool, exciting, and attractive. Satan whispers lies all across the land.

Do not let yourself be deceived. Do not let those whispers break down your standards. Do not listen to the voice that says: “That movie is okay; there is

only one bad part.” Or, “Intimacy is okay if you are in love.” Or, “You can repent later.” Or, “As long as we do not go over the edge, it is okay.”

With these lies Satan tries to break down your sense of the truth and blind you to the reality of what you hear, see, and do. Satan wants sin and wickedness to get into your heart and into your actions. He knows that sustained exposure to immorality and pornography can lead to addiction, and that is what he wants for you.

Listen to Nephi’s description of Satan’s work in our day to lure you, trap you, and bind you:

And there are also secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil, for he is the founder of all these things; yea, the founder of murder, and works of darkness; yea, and he leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever.¹¹

Like the mists of darkness in Lehi’s dream, we are surrounded by temptation. But the law of chastity, like the iron rod, will lead us safely through if we will hold fast to it and live it.

Brothers and sisters, the law of chastity is the word of God about moral purity. It is powerful to protect. With Mormon we say:

Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—¹²

If we are to lay hold on the law of chastity and live it, we must do two things: (1) learn to see things as they really are, and (2) act on what we see.

To see things as they really are, we must follow Amulek’s counsel and “be watchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the temptations of the devil.”¹³

The command to watch is powerful. It means to be discerning, aware, and conscious of what is happening. Here are two simple examples: No matter what the rating of a movie might be, if you see before you on the screen immorality made to look attractive and exciting, please see it for what it is—the “snares and wiles of the devil” meant to dull your conscience and stimulate your appetites. If you get an invitation to a costume party where everyone is dressed in Roman togas or other immodest wear, see it for what it is—the temptations of the devil masquerading as fun.

To be watchful means seeing temptation and sin for what they are, not rationalizing, not ignoring, not being lulled into complacency or neglect. It also means being careful and disciplined and thoughtful about what we see, hear, and do.

Watchfulness is also connected to looking and seeing. We all carry around with us a kind of social mirror that expresses the image of what we are and what we want to become. Being watchful unto prayer means looking into the mirror of Christ, not the mirror of the world. Do not look into the mirror of the world for guidance and direction.

Take to heart Elder Dallin H. Oaks’ counsel given to the women of BYU–Idaho from this pulpit in November 2006. This counsel may be applied equally well to the men.

Nor should women emulate the worldly ways of womanhood. Your destiny is to be a wife and a mother in Zion, not a model and a street-walker in Babylon. You should dress and act accordingly.¹⁴

Satan uses the mirror of the world to make bad things appear good and good things appear bad. Look with eyes that see, guided by the Spirit. Look into the mirror of Christ where there is sure guidance and truth.

If we have eyes to see, we must act on what we see. Living the law of chastity requires that we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior has seen it all. The scriptures teach us that He has suffered “temptations of every kind.”¹⁵ He has experienced every temptation you will face. But He gave in to none of them. He has power over all of them. He himself has declared that He “knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted.”¹⁶

This is why Paul could say:

... but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.¹⁷

The way to escape from temptation is through faith in the power and strength of Jesus Christ. But we must exercise that faith and act. Faith is a principle of action. Living the law of chastity requires that we act—walk away; say no; turn it off; walk out; put it down; control our thoughts and our behavior; choose righteous friends and companions; fill our lives with good books, inspiring music, and wholesome entertainment. Act to pray, to seek, and to ask. Act to follow this great admonition of Alma:

... humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit.... Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life....¹⁸

We know that living the law of chastity is not easy. It has never been easy. When the hormones bubble inside, there is much need for control and discipline.

We also know and bear witness that the Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save. Trust in Him. We pray you will see the law of chastity as divine protection, acting in faith that He who has all power over all things will always be there to give you strength and support.

THE LAW AS PREPARATION

If you heed Alma’s counsel, the law of chastity will be a marvelous preparation for temple marriage and for building an eternal family. These blessings will come to all of you in the Lord’s own time if you are true and faithful to your covenants.

Listen carefully to the description of the foundation of a successful marriage and family in the proclamation:

The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.¹⁹

Living the law of chastity is a powerful preparation for the spiritual foundation so essential to the commitments and covenants of marriage. A wedding is a happy and exciting time.

We remember well the excitement and happiness of being a newly married couple. But we can tell you from our own experience that the joy and happiness we felt on our wedding day pales in comparison to the joy and happiness we feel today—35 years later surrounded by a growing family. What explains the difference in how we feel now? We believe the most important change is the spiritual growth we have experienced together over many years.



The proclamation teaches us that everything that contributes to a successful marriage has spiritual roots. To live the law of chastity before marriage, you must exercise faith, be watchful unto prayer, and seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Living the letter and the spirit of that law is a crucible for the development of character, self-control, discipline, unselfishness, and spirituality. Having lived the law before marriage, you bring a reservoir of spiritual strength to your marriage. Living it after you are

married helps you replenish and increase that reservoir and sustain self-mastery and spirituality.

Living the law of chastity is all about self-control. It is all about putting the Lord and your eternal companion first. Living the law of chastity before and after marriage will help you develop a spiritual foundation on which you create bonds of trust, respect, compassion, and love. When you enter the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, the Lord commands:

“Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.”²⁰

To love with all your heart and to cleave unto your spouse and to none else means that the deepest desires, strongest attachments, and most powerful emotions of your hearts must be directed only to your eternal companion. No intimate images or thoughts of someone else should ever be in your heart. You must avoid any behavior that could lead to adultery.

We bear witness that the love you feel at the beginning of your marriage can grow and develop into that deep, abiding love which defines an eternal marriage; but it cannot grow and deepen unless you live the law of chastity in your marriage. Alma taught this principle powerfully. To his son Shiblon he said: “see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love.”²¹

There are some who will tell you that when you marry you get the green light on intimate behavior with your spouse, but such teaching is another of Satan’s lies. Of course, after you marry, the Lord commands you to consummate your intimate, personal relationship and to cleave unto each other. That physical relationship is sacred and holy. It is part of becoming one, wholly and fully united in heart and soul. It is part of building your eternal family. It is pleasing before the Lord; but—and this is a very important

qualifier—it must be established in love and kindness, in patience and unselfishness.

Your intimate relationship is just that—a relationship. It is something you create together. Both husband and wife should experience it as joyous and fulfilling. It must be established, therefore, without exploitation, without abuse of any kind, and without self-indulgence. Satan would have you give way to the natural man in your marriage—the man of passion, of carnal desire, of gratification of every impulse and appetite. But remember, the natural man is an enemy to God. You simply cannot give way to the natural man and ever hope to have a union that is holy, a love that is eternal and pure, or a marriage that is blessed and sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. Thus, restraint, control, and bridling your passions are just as important after marriage as before.

Living the law of chastity is a powerful preparation for a rich and fulfilling marriage and for the creation of an eternal family. One of the glorious purposes of the intimate relationship in marriage is to bring little boys and girls into the world. We can testify of the joy and the miracle of the birth of a child. The proclamation on the family makes it very clear, however, that these children of God have a right to a home where father and mother “honor marital vows with complete fidelity.”²²

The law of chastity plays a powerful role in creating that kind of home. We bear witness to you that children thrive when their parents are united in love, hope, purpose, and are totally committed to one another and to their children. We have learned over the years that the most important thing we can do for our children is to love and honor each other. The law of chastity is essential to that eternal union between man and woman, that unity of heart and soul that is the foundation of an eternal family. That union must be both physical and deeply spiritual. It must

be a union of two souls—physically and spiritually joined together.

Only those who use God’s creative power in the bonds of matrimony, who are sealed to one another and to their children by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and who live chaste and virtuous lives will forge an eternal union and an eternal family. Only those who live the law of chastity learn to use divine power in the only way it can be used eternally. The law of chastity is there to help us become like our Father. It is there to guide us and help us become one with Him. It is there to prepare us with the devotion, unselfishness, love, and spiritual strength that define those who receive a fullness of celestial glory through the merits and mercy of Jesus Christ. In the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Prophet Joseph describes the heirs of eternal life:

Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.²³

Note carefully these words: “all things are theirs, whether life or death.” Our Heavenly Father gives to all those who are called up and crowned with exaltation in the celestial kingdom the power to create life in an eternal family eternally.

Our dear brothers and sisters, this is your divine destiny. This is the preparation of the law of chastity. If you honor your covenants and live the law of chastity, you will receive from your Heavenly Father the richest blessings of the kingdom. Your marriage will have a strong, spiritual foundation. You will be filled with love to overflowing because of your discipline and unselfishness. And you will raise up unto the Lord a righteous, eternal family. We bear witness to you that these promises are true.

THE MIRACLE OF FORGIVENESS

The promises that follow obedience to the law of chastity are truly glorious, but what if you make a mistake? What if you break the law of chastity? What then?

Brothers and sisters, if you have broken the law and wounded yourself and others, we want you to know that you can become clean and pure and whole again. We bear witness to you that the Lord Jesus Christ has power to cleanse you from sin, to heal you, and redeem you.

Listen to the Savior's words to the people of Nephi at the time of the great destruction following His death:

O all ye that are spared... will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me....

Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God.²⁴

The Savior promises healing, redemption, and complete forgiveness to those who come to Him and repent with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

This is our first message to you about repentance: It is possible; and it is very good. We do not, however, want to leave you with the impression that repentance is easy. So, we also have a second message about repentance: It is a long, hard road. How long

and how hard depends on what you have done. You probably learned about the steps of repentance in Primary and Sunday School. You must recognize that what you have done is wrong and confess your sins to the Lord and your bishop. Your bishop will guide you in ridding your life of anything that contributed to your downfall. You must keep the commandments. You must change your life. You must try to restore to those you have injured what you have taken from them. However, as Elder Maxwell taught:

Sometimes- restitution is not possible in real terms, such as when one contributed to another's loss of faith or virtue. Instead, a subsequent example of righteousness provides a compensatory form of restitution.²⁵

Through all of this you will suffer pain and anguish of soul. There is no true repentance without suffering. That suffering will be especially acute if you have broken eternal covenants and wounded a spouse and children. But the Savior has descended below all things and emerged totally victorious over all things. Through His power, His mercy, and His grace, you can be redeemed and healed. Those you have wounded may also feel His healing power. If your heart is right, your pain and sorrow will be tinged with hope. That hope of forgiveness will work in you. As you walk the road of repentance, the Lord will be with you. Through your faith and hope and your steadfastness in Christ, the day will come when the Spirit will witness to your soul that you are clean.

The Atonement is real. Jesus is the Redeemer. He is mighty to save.

Brothers and sisters, it is better to be obedient and never break the law of chastity. But if there is anyone here who needs to confess and repent but has not, we urge you to go and see your bishop now. Do it today. Do not let another day go by in a state of de-

nial. Start on the path of repentance now. The Lord will bless you.

CONCLUSION

Our wonderful brothers and sisters, we stand before you today united in faith and testimony. We love the gospel. We thank our Heavenly Father every day for the plan of salvation. We testify that Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. What a wonderful thing it is to have a living prophet! We have listened today to revelation on the family given to us by living prophets.

We bear witness that the things we have taught today are true. The law of chastity can be for you a bright, shining light in a darkening world, a powerful source of protection and preparation. We pray that you will see it that way and live it that way, that your lives may be chaste and virtuous forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ The Family: A Proclamation to the World, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, p. 102

² Romans 8:17

³ The Family: A Proclamation to the World, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, p. 102

⁴ Alma 39:5

⁵ Exodus 20:14

⁶ 3 Nephi 12:27-30

⁷ Richard G. Scott, "The Power of Righteousness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, p. 68.

⁸ Jeffrey R. Holland, *Of Souls, Symbols and Sacraments*, (Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, 2001), p. 34

⁹ 2 Nephi 28:20-22

¹⁰ D&C 89:4

¹¹ 2 Nephi 26:22

¹² Helaman 3:29

¹³ Alma 34:39

¹⁴ Dallin H. Oaks, "Be Wise," Brigham Young University-Idaho Devotional, Nov. 7, 2006

¹⁵ Alma 7:11

¹⁶ D&C 62:1

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:13

¹⁸ Alma 13:28-29

¹⁹ The Family: A Proclamation to the World, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, p. 102

²⁰ D&C 42:22

²¹ Alma 38:12

²² The Family: A Proclamation to the World, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, p. 102

²³ D&C 76:59, 62

²⁴ 3 Nephi 9:13-14, 21-22

²⁵ Neal A. Maxwell, "Repentance," *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, p. 30

