

DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

Brigham Young University

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It is a source of great personal satisfaction to me to have this privilege of addressing the largest assemblage of faithful and inquiring minds to be found anywhere in all academia.

This student body has no equal, either in its search for truth or in its application of the established realities to the lives of men.

If you and I may now be guided by the power of that Holy Spirit shed forth by Him whose all things are, I shall attempt to present some strong views on learning about and living in harmony with the eternal truths available to us in this mortal sphere.

As we travel—pilgrim-like—through this probationary estate, the Lord our Maker expects us to learn as much about the laws of nature as in our power lies, and then to apply the fruits of our learning for the betterment of mankind.

Life itself is a process of learning and living, and our college years are that part of life in which we are privileged to pursue a course of intensive study and to choose how we will apply what we learn to our patterns of life.

As to what we learn and how we live, our course, on the one hand, may be one in harmony with the eternal principles which have come to us by revelation, or, on the other hand, it may be influenced by the theories of men and the practices of the wicked and ungodly.

There is a marked difference between the educational aims and pedagogical procedures followed by students who adhere to church standards and those who study and live after the manner of the world.

It also makes a difference whether we are dealing with the absolute sciences where all persons who perform the same experiment gain the same end result, or with theoretical and speculative fields in which the theories of some so-called sciences run counter to the principles of the gospel.

We do not want the theories of men or the dogmatism of pseudo-science to sweep or creep across our campuses.

If I may be so bold, I shall take this text from President Joseph F. Smith. He said: “There are at least three dangers that threaten the Church within, and the authorities need to awaken to the fact that the people should be warned unceasingly against them . . . They

are flattery of prominent men in the world, false educational ideas, and sexual impurity.” (*Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 312-313.)

“In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be.... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tim. 3:1-7.)

The fact that “false educational ideas” lead us astray is not open to question. This is a matter on which reasonable men cannot differ.

If we are taught that immorality is really a new morality, we may commit sex sin and lose our souls.

If we are taught that the dictatorial power needed to impose social programs upon us is really in the public interest, we may end up subject to the slavery of state socialism.

If we are taught that death has always prevailed in this sphere, we may ignore the fall of Adam and reject the atonement of Christ which came as a result thereof.

Now it is not my purpose to identify any false educational ideas which do or may exist here or elsewhere. In the first place I am not qualified to delve into the various scholastic disciplines and point to what is true or false. In the second place I would not do so if I were so qualified.

We need not mount a crusade against what any of us may chance to suppose is false. That which is untrue will eventually sink into oblivion, for it is an eternal principle that truth will prevail.

Instead let us bind ourselves to those eternal verities which have come to us by revelation; then let us require the discoveries and theories and reasonings of the world to be in harmony with these verities.

The small mind, the mind in which intellectuality alone is enthroned, says: “I have learned all these great and wondrous things by studying philosophy, evolution, archeology, or what have you. Now I shall test the gospel against what I have learned and I shall use my newly found knowledge to prove the gospel is true.”

The great mind, the mind that is both intellectual and spiritual, the mind that knows what God has revealed and what man has discovered, says: “Here are the great eternal verities. They are the mind and will and voice of the Lord. They are true. I will now test the philosophies, theories, and concepts of the world. If they are in harmony with revealed truth, well and good. If not, I shall lay them aside and await the day when further discoveries and analysis prove them wrong, for I know that truth and only truth will prevail.”

The true order of heaven, as it prevailed in pre-existence and as it now operates in mortality, is summed up in the words of Joseph Smith—who being asked how he governed so great and diverse a people as the Latter-day Saints, responded: “I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves.”

Let us give heed to some of the great principles which govern us in our pursuit of truth. Among them are these:

1. We seek truth. We seek a knowledge of things as they are and as they were and as they are to be. We desire to know all things. “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.” (D&C 93:36.) There are no bars set, no dams to impede our progress. No doors are closed to inquiry, no restrictions hold us back. We seek truth, diamond pure truth, truth unadulterated with the slightest taint of error or evil.
2. Truth comes by study and by faith. It is discovered in the laboratory of the chemist and dug out of the tombs of antiquity. We are commanded: “Seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” (D&C 88:119.) It is not study only by which knowledge comes. The secrets of the earth and the universe are unfolded by the power of faith.
3. The acquisition of truth is not an end in itself. We are commanded to learn the doctrines of the kingdom, and the laws of the gospel, together with a knowledge of all that transpires at home and abroad, or is found on earth and in heaven—all to the end that we may spread the message of the restoration and build up the great latter-day kingdom. (D&C 88:77-81.)

We are obligated to use the truth and light that is ours to further the Lord’s interests and to save our own souls. “O that cunning plan of the evil one!” Jacob says. “O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.” (2 Ne. 9:28-29.)

4. Truth and knowledge come to the faithful by revelation. Abraham learned the truths of astronomy by revelation. Moses gained a knowledge of the creation from the same source. The sealed portion of the Book of Mormon contains a revealed history of the world from the beginning to the end. Our revelations say: “In that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.” (D&C 101:32-34.)

But we need not wait for the day of Millennial renewal to gain far more light and truth than we now have. Among the prophetic utterances of Joseph Smith we find these words:

“God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now;

“Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory;

“A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest.

“All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—

“All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—

“According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest.” (D&C 121:26-32.)

May I now set forth before you some of the eternal realities which have come to us by revelation and which are, therefore, the great standards by which we should judge all else that we study and learn.

1. There is a God in heaven who is infinite and eternal

—all power, might, dominion

—knows all things

—Personal being

—body of flesh and bones

2. We are members of family of God

—He ordained plan of salvation

—Agency and laws

—Lord’s eternal perspective

3. Pre-existence of man, the earth, and all forms of life

4. Earth and all things created in immortality

—Pronounced very good

—Paradisiacal earth

—Immortality

—No death

—“All things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.” (2 Ne. 2:22.)

5. Fall of Adam

—Temporal and spiritual death

—And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.” (2 Ne. 2:23-25.)

“Because that Adam fell, we are; and by his fall came death; and we are made partakers of misery and woe. “ (Moses 6:48.)

—”And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.” (Moses 5:11.)

6. Atonement of Christ

—Divine Sonship

—Based on fall

—Immortality

—Eternal life

7. Gospel and plan of salvation

—Based on atonement

—Faith, repentance &

—Overcome world

—Born again

—Be sanctified

—Morality and decency

8. Restoration of gospel

—Knowledge

—Priesthood and keys

—Power of Holy Ghost

—Gifts and miracles

—Continuous revelation

—Book of Mormon

9. Great reservoir of doctrine

—We believe in a premortal life, in eternal marriage, salvation for the dead, the resurrection of the just and of the unjust, eternal judgment, and kingdoms of glory in the eternal worlds.

10. “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”

—Testimony and faith

—Build on sure foundation

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” (Eph. 4:14.)