

Leadership in Light and Truth

KIM B. CLARK

It is wonderful to be here today. I want to thank the university, President Bateman, and the board of trustees for this honor. This honorary degree has great personal meaning for me. I have relationships in this university that go back many years. People who have touched my life in powerful ways have studied here and taught here. Inspired by my Uncle Martin Hickman, who served here as dean for many years, and by the other great teachers I had when I studied here, this is where I chose to become a scholar and a teacher and to make that my profession. I also spent some important life-changing moments here, most of which involved meeting Sue and trying to persuade her to become my wife and move to Boston with me. I think Boston was the hardest part for Sue, but we have persevered, and this year we celebrated our thirtieth anniversary.

I am grateful to be here today and grateful for the opportunity to say a few words to the graduating class of 2001.

A Call to Leadership

I would like you to reflect with me for a few moments on leadership. I have in mind leadership with a small *l*, the kind of leadership we need at every level of every organization, enterprise, and activity in our lives. And that includes our families and the Church.

We live in remarkable times. You know that it is a wondrous time in the kingdom, when temples dot the land, when the gospel is spreading across the earth, and when we see the power of faith evident all around us. It is also a remarkable time in the world. Tremendous changes are taking place in technology, in political institutions, in

Kim B. Clark, dean of the Harvard Business School, received an honorary doctorate and delivered this BYU commencement address on August 16, 2001.

international relationships, and in the character of important enterprises and whole countries. It is a time of turmoil and turbulence and uncertainty, but it is also a time of great opportunity.

Over the last several years I have seen firsthand the implications of these changes for enterprises big and small. I have worked with people in business, education, and government all across the world. Everywhere I go there is a common theme, a common assessment for the future—and that is the great need for leadership.

Today you stand at a new beginning. You are off to new homes all over the world, off to new opportunities and new challenges. I have no doubt that because of who you are and how you will live your lives, you will have great influence and opportunities for significant leadership.

As we reflect together for a moment today on what lies ahead for you, I would like to read to you a passage of scripture. I am sure you have read and heard it many times. But I invite you today to listen carefully because these words hold specific and personal meaning for you:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. [Matthew 5:14–16]

Consider what this means for you. It is in its deepest meaning a call for you to make your eye single to the glory of God so that the light of the gospel may burn within you.

This is a call to action. You cannot let your light shine unless you are engaged in work that connects you to our Heavenly Father's children in this world.

It is also a call to truth, a call to live your life according to true principles. I believe that the light within you shines through true principles in action.

It is also, therefore, a call to live your life whole, so that no matter where you are, no matter what

you do, true principles will guide the way you treat other people, the standards you set, the way you make decisions, and the spirit you bring to everything you do.

This call of the Lord to bring light and truth to the world is a call to leadership. This is leadership with a small *l*, leadership at every level of every organization and activity. It is leadership that serves and inspires in your families, in your neighborhoods, in your wards and stakes, in your communities, in education, in business, in the arts, in health, and in whatever you undertake, wherever you work, and whatever you do.

The Characteristics of Leadership

All organizations and the people in them need the strength and power that come from the application of true principles. Indeed, I believe the effective leadership we need in the turbulent, challenging world that awaits you will, in fact, be based on true principles. Let me illustrate that idea with five characteristics of leadership for the twenty-first century. They are pretty important in any century, but they are particularly important in this one. As you listen, check them against the things you know are true.

The first is *integrity*. With all the uncertainty and turbulence in the world, we need leaders with strong values—leaders with integrity who respect others and are willing to take personal responsibility for their actions. Leaders with integrity are honest with others and with themselves.

The second is *energy*. Leaders in the twenty-first century are going to need a lot of energy. But I use the word *energy* here in a different way. I believe we need leaders who energize those around them and who make everyone around them better. They create energy, not by administrating but by ministering—by really caring about people, by creating opportunities for them to grow, by recognizing their value, and by giving them a voice in their work.

The third is *inspiration*. Great leaders in the years ahead will inspire trust and confidence in those around them. They will help to create a vision of what is possible and a sense of the larger

purpose of their work. They will help people see the greatness that is within them and what can be achieved if they work together.

The fourth is *wisdom*. Leaders need to be teachers. They need to see beyond the horizon and help others understand how to get there. They need to understand in depth the true principles that govern their organization and its success. They need to teach those principles every way they can. They need to be great communicators and teach in word and deed, especially deed.

And finally, *courage*. Leadership, even leadership with a small *l*, requires courage. Leaders need to do hard things—set high standards and uphold them, make tough decisions, be unpopular, and do the right thing even though the wrong thing is much easier.

That is what we need: leaders with integrity, energy, inspiration, wisdom, and courage. These are the characteristics of leadership that I believe will be particularly important and effective precisely in the world I see ahead—a world of turbulence, of complexity, where people are the crucial difference, where trust is paramount, and where principle-based action is the way work gets done efficiently and well. And remember: this is leadership with a small *l*, and we need it everywhere.

I believe that if you heed the Lord's call to be the light of the world, you will be those leaders. But it is not going to be easy. In fact, bringing light and truth to the world takes so much skill and capacity that it often will seem beyond your personal reach. And, in fact, that is precisely the point. None of you can do this by yourself. But if your purposes are righteous and if you are guided by true principles, you may draw on the powers of heaven—all of them. You are not alone in this work. Indeed, you are agents of the Lord, on the Lord's errand.

Be a Light unto the World

This is your call: to be a leader, to be a light to the world. As I have thought about that call and about this passage in your life today, I have thought about passages in my own life and I have thought about the things I have learned

from people who have helped me, especially my parents. I would like to offer some of that counsel to you today. I hope it will be helpful along the road ahead.

First, let me say a word about family. All around you are the people—your parents, spouses, and family—who have made this passage today possible. These are the people who have invested in you, who have with their time, their resources, and their love made today possible. Because of all they have done, you know there will be no more sure foundation in your life than a home you create that is full of life and love.

My brothers and sisters, the words of the prophets are true: The most important work you will do in your lives will be within the walls of your own home. That is the most important place for you to invest. It is the most important place for you to lead through light and truth. That work will be the foundation for everything else you do.

It is a beautiful, wonderful thing to raise a great family, so I hope that someday in a place like this, maybe even in this place, you will sit where your friends and family and loved ones sit today and your children will sit where you sit and you will feel the same love and hope that your family and loved ones feel today for you.

I would like to close today on a personal note. I have thought about my parents a lot in the last two months. My mother died three and a half years ago, and my father passed away a few weeks ago on the first of June. My dad graduated from BYU in 1939, and he and my mom loved this university. I know this honor today brings them great joy.

I would like to leave you with two pieces of advice I got from my mom and dad. They are an inspiration to me, and I hope you, too, will always remember them.

“Ride the High Country”

The first comes from my dad. My dad was a real cowboy. He grew up in southern Utah riding the range and breaking horses. He loved horses and he loved to ride. There is a saying he taught us that captures something about the land he loved and something about the leadership that

was such an important part of his life. My dad was a wonderful man and a wonderful leader. He lived the principles we have talked about today. His favorite saying carries beautiful and profound advice. It is “Ride the high country.”

My dad knew that we live our lives day to day in the more settled parts, in the valleys of life. But we do not always have to ride there. We can ride the high country, where the light is intensely bright, where the sky is deep and blue, and where it seems you can almost ride forever.

The message of this saying is, Set your sights high. Get up out of the valleys and the shadows of everyday life and ride the high country, where you can see forever. Soak up the light that is there and let your spirit soar. Let the wind blow in your hair, let your heart dream big dreams, and let your passion for life and for living and for making a difference run free.

In the wonderful, challenging, difficult world ahead, we need leaders who see beyond the horizon, leaders who know the larger purpose of our lives. And so I hope you will take my dad’s counsel to heart and ride the high country.

“Remember Who You Are”

The second piece of advice comes from my mother. My mother was a wonderful leader and teacher. Every day, every time I walked out the door, she would look me in the eye and she would say, “Kim, you remember who you are—every single day. Remember all those people who worked and sacrificed to make it possible for you to be where you are. Remember that when you walk out this door, you carry a mantle of responsibility, the good name of this family, and the hopes and dreams of your mom and dad. Remember the promise that is yours, the wonderful opportunities in front of you, and the hope that is in you for a better world.”

As you head off into the great things ahead, I say to you, “Remember who you are. Remember those who paved the way for you. Remember those who follow after you.” It is so important. You are important. We have great hopes for you. The world ahead will be turbulent and uncertain. It will be full of risk and great opportunity. We need leaders who will make a difference in that

world, leaders who are firmly grounded in the highest standards of integrity, respect for other people, and personal accountability. We need leaders who are not afraid to set their sights high and who will dream and hope and believe in themselves and in those around them. We need leaders who are a light unto the world.

You can be those leaders. And so my counsel to you is, “Remember who you are.”

In closing, I would like to bear my testimony. We have talked about light and truth, about true principles, and about the light within you. I want you to know that there is but one source of light and truth. The call to let your light shine is a call to seek light and truth from the source of all light and truth, even Jesus Christ. It is a call to bring Him into your life, that through you He might touch everyone that you touch. I know that He lives, that He is the light and life of the world. I know that through the power of His Atonement He has overcome all things. I know there is nothing that you will experience in your lives over which He does not have power. I know that He knows you and loves you and will always be there to lift you up, to bless your life with love and hope and light.

And so this is my hope for you: May you build your life on a sure foundation of faith in Jesus Christ and the warmth and love of your family. May you come to know the Savior and the healing power of the Atonement in your life. And may this promise of the Lord given in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants be yours:

And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up. [D&C 84:88]

I know that promise is true. I know it is true from my own experience. I have no doubt, my brothers and sisters, that if you heed His call to you, to be a light unto the world, the light and truth of the gospel will burn deep within your heart, you will ride the high country, you will remember who you are, and you will be a light unto the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.