

Fulfilling the Destiny of Zion

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Welcome to another school year. It is such a joy to be with you again. Since we met in this capacity last year, there have been so many exciting developments that it would be impossible to list them all. Let me just share some examples of student achievements in this past year.

More than 2,000 of our students—an all-time high—had a study-abroad experience this past year, participating in more than 200 programs in seventy-five countries. Truly the world is our campus.

At the same time, inspiring learning opportunities were also provided to our students here in Provo. More than 1,100 BYU students registered for on-campus internships. These students worked in teams on projects for businesses and nonprofit organizations throughout the United States. Although the program is offered through the Marriott School of Business, 49 percent of the students who participated were not Marriott School students. On the athletic front, the men's cross-country team finished third in the nation, and the women's volleyball team reached the sweet-sixteen round of the NCAA tournament for the sixth consecutive year.

Individual students flourished here as well. To cite two of hundreds of examples, art

student Julian Harper won the BLOOM international young artist art competition, beating out more than 2,300 student artists from more than ninety countries. And Anne Thomas was selected as a Gates Scholar, one of only thirty-five undergraduates from across the world who will receive a full-tuition scholarship to Cambridge University under that program. Anne is the fifth BYU Gates Scholar.

And so we begin a new year, determined to build on the successes of the past. As I have thought about what I could say to provide some motivating context for what lies ahead of us, my mind was drawn to the prophecy of President John Taylor that was highlighted in President Spencer W. Kimball's second-century address:

You will see the day that Zion will be as far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind as we are today in regard to religious matters. You mark my words, and write them down, and see if they do not come to pass.¹

Kevin J Worthen, president of Brigham Young University, delivered this university conference address on August 27, 2018.

This is, for me, a soul-stirring prophecy. Equally stirring is President Kimball's brief but deepening elaboration:

*Surely we cannot refuse that rendezvous with history because so much of what is desperately needed by mankind is bound up in our being willing to contribute to the fulfillment of that prophecy.*²

As I read this prophecy and President Kimball's inspired and enthusiastic embrace of the rendezvous with history that it describes, I was struck by two things that had not stood out to me before in my many readings of President Taylor's statement. First, I noticed that President Taylor indicated that we were to outpace the world with regard to "everything pertaining to *learning* of every kind." The prophecy is not, as I had previously assumed, that we would lead the world in the discovery of new information of every kind but that we would be proficient with respect to learning of every kind. As I thought about the emphasis that we are giving to inspiring learning and its unique combination of faith-based teaching and student-centered research, I felt reassured that we are on the right track as our students learn in a manner consistent with gospel principles, which include learning by study, by faith, and by experience. The results of the emphasis on inspiring learning have been most heartwarming. It is one way in which we can be ahead of the world with respect to learning of every kind.

Second, I noted that President Taylor did not expressly refer to universities in general or even Brigham Young University in particular when he made his prophecy. It is "Zion" that President Taylor said is destined to be a beacon to the world with respect to learning. This caused me to reflect on the new ideas in learning that are being explored at our sister institutions at BYU-Idaho, BYU-Hawaii, LDS Business College, and BYU-Pathway Worldwide. While each institution has a distinctive mission, each may have something to

add to the way in which Zion will outpace the world with respect to learning of every kind.

More important for us—and President Kimball made the connection with us—the emphasis on Zion caused me to think about the role BYU plays in building and extending the influence of Zion. The scriptures indicate that "the Lord [is] well pleased that there should be a school in Zion."³ And exactly thirty years ago, then BYU president Jeffrey R. Holland gave a classic address on that subject in this setting.⁴ Noting the early and deep doctrinal emphasis on education throughout this dispensation, President Holland posited that "there can be no Zion without" a university.⁵ Along similar lines, President Merrill J. Bateman urged us to become a Zion university⁶ and later elaborated on the search for truth at a Zion university.⁷

Reflecting on all these thoughts, it struck me that it is possible that we will fulfill the destiny outlined in President Taylor's prophecy only to the extent that we become more Zion-like, both as individuals and as a campus community.

Becoming a Zion People

The concept of becoming a Zion people is embedded deep in our theology. In this dispensation, the Lord's desire for His people to build a Zion society was made apparent even before the Church was organized. In April 1829, a year before the Church was formally organized, the Lord instructed Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery that they were to "seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion."⁸ The same admonition was given in succeeding months to Hyrum Smith, Joseph Knight, and David Whitmer, as recorded in sections 11, 12, and 14 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

At that time, the Saints' understanding of the meaning of the term was vague, at best. It was not until Joseph Smith received the revelation concerning Enoch and his people in connection with the Prophet's translation of the Bible from June 1830 to February 1831 that modern-day members of the Church began

to comprehend the concept of a Zion society in any concrete terms. With that revelation—which is largely recorded in chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Moses—came not only an understanding of what a Zion society is like but also some comprehension of why the people of God in this dispensation should be so concerned with the concept. In the revelation, the Lord made it clear that a new Zion is to come forth in this dispensation—one patterned so completely after Enoch’s Zion that the two societies will literally and physically unite in order to usher in the millennial reign of the Savior.⁹

In Moses 7:62–63, the Lord stated:

And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare . . . , and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there.

One of the defining characteristics of a Zion society is that people are “of one heart and one mind.”¹⁰ I do not believe this means that we all need to think exactly alike on all subjects. However, it does imply a unity of motivation and purpose. The agreed-upon goal or purpose of a Zion society is the welfare of each member of the society. It requires an other-centered rather than a self-centered orientation. The world would have us focus on ourselves and our own accomplishments. Those with this orientation “set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.”¹¹ By contrast, the scriptures teach, those who labor “in Zion” must “labor for Zion.”¹²

Just as those in a Zion society must have the right shared purpose—or mind-set—they must also share the proper motivation—or heart. Those in the world are motivated by pride. They seek the “gain and praise of the world.” Those in a Zion society are motivated by charity, and “charity is love.”¹³ Their hearts

are “knit together in unity and in love one towards another,”¹⁴ as our conference theme urges us to do.

While we may not always view it that way, these two different motivations—pride and charity—are really exact polar opposites. We often think of humility as being the opposite of pride and hatred as being the opposite of charity. Yet as President Ezra Taft Benson has pointed out, “the central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen.”¹⁵ Enmity puts us in competition with others. We succeed only at their expense. This is the root cause of pride.

As C. S. Lewis explained:

*Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking, there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest.*¹⁶

Enmity—or hatred of others—is the core of pride. The cure for pride is, therefore, the opposite of hatred: love or charity. Pride can be a powerful motivation, especially in the academic world. Rankings and ratings comparing us with our peers are the norm. Our challenge—the challenge of becoming a Zion university—is to be motivated by charity, or love, in our academic work.

How do we do that? Fourteen years ago, when he was the academic vice president at BYU in Provo, now BYU–Hawaii president John S. Tanner shared a memorable verbal and visual description of what that might look like, using what he called a “professional pyramid,”¹⁷ with love at the center. He explained:

I resolved that my professional life must remain founded on love rather than on fear of failure, devotion to duty, or even vaulting ambition. . . . Love

*of learning had drawn me to the academy and to BYU. I could not imagine a career here absent such passion.*¹⁸

President Tanner then explained that this motivational love should be directed toward three principal objects. First is our field of study—in his case English. He said:

*I resolved to seize the expectation for scholarship not as an exercise in résumé building or hoop jumping but as an opportunity for deeper engagement with a subject I loved.*¹⁹

Many of us can relate to this orientation. For many academics it is the love of ideas or the love of art and music that drew us to this career. It is what excites us; we love to learn about things that we find fascinating. We find beauty and meaning in that learning.

Current examples of this passion—this love of subject matter—abound on this campus. Let me share just two of them, both the result of a *BYU Magazine* effort to capture a small portion of the excitement that the love of subject matter generates on campus. First is Professor Byron J. Adams from the BYU Department of Biology [a video was shown]:

It is not a panda bear. You know, it is not a koala. It is not a puppy dog or a baby goat. It certainly is something that I think is absolutely beautiful.

*So the McMurdo Dry Valleys of Antarctica are the coldest, driest, windiest deserts on planet earth. We collected a bunch of samples from a landscape that looked like what could have been Mars. And the very first time I am looking, you know, through a microscope, I am not expecting to find much at all. Instead I see that the dish is full of these microscopic animals: *Scottinema lindsayae*. This nematode was named after Robert Falcon Scott—the dude who led the British Antarctic expeditions.*

First of all, I am stunned that there are living things in there. But under the microscope you can see all of these features. It has these little probolae, these little feeler things on top of its head that make

it look like it is wearing this little crown. Then it has the annulations that go down the side of the body, producing a really beautiful pearl effect—sort of like the pearl paint jobs you might see on a hot rod car or something.

*I would say from that moment, *Scottinema lindsayae* and I, we bonded. It is a beautiful thing to look at, and it also tells a beautiful story about how these organisms can persist and survive in the harshest ecosystems on planet earth. To me, dude, that is just face melting, man. And I totally, totally dig it.*²⁰

Next is an example from Professor Renata T. Forste from the BYU Department of Sociology [a video was shown]:

What is the best indicator of the well-being of a society? It is the status of its women and girls.

For fifteen years of my academic career, I have studied maternal education and child health in the Altiplano in Bolivia. What I found was that even if a mother has nine years of education, the infant mortality rate is cut in half. Secondary-educated mothers have better nourished children, they are healthier, and those women have higher wages, which they then, in turn, turn around and invest in their children and their future.

*Even in the United States, college-educated women are more likely to marry. They marry more involved fathers, and they provide greater cognitive stimulation for their children. And they are even more likely to breastfeed their children than less-educated mothers. The benefits of education not only empower and bless the lives of women and girls but also the lives of men and boys. An educated girl can help strengthen her family and her community and help break the chains of poverty. Education matters, and that is why to me, a girl in school is a beautiful thing.*²¹

It is easy to sense the love that these two faculty members have for their fields of study. The exact subject may vary—from microscopic Antarctic organisms to the power of educating girls—but the passion is the same. I trust that

most of you can readily relate to how the love of a subject enriches and enhances your lives and work.

The second object of President Tanner's pyramid of love is the student:

*I loved my students. I loved to teach. Yes, some aspects of teaching are wearing and wrenching—like grading papers—but . . . I never cease to feel compelled by the faces of students eager to learn.*²²

At this point the pyramid seems to reflect the tension between teaching and research that is so familiar on every campus. We may often feel torn between spending time with students and spending time with our subjects, and many in the academic world would say that we have to choose to emphasize one over the other if we are truly to excel in either. However, the pyramid anticipates that we will bring the two together at a higher level, a level that amplifies both our love of learning and our love of students. As President Tanner noted, "BYU faculty should eschew false either/or thinking about teaching and research."²³ He also said:

*How can we love our subjects without wanting to share them with those who come to us to learn? Or [how can we] truly love our students without holding them accountable for knowing the subjects?*²⁴

Thus, at a Zion university, we ask you to bring the two together. One way of doing that is to directly involve students in our research or otherwise share with them our excitement and love for what we are doing in that realm. Again, examples abound on campus. Let me share just one, a video about a BYU holographic research project [a video was shown]:

Erich Nygaard: *Our group has a mission to take the 3-D displays of science fiction and make them real.*

Daniel Smalley: *We started this project with the goal in mind of creating the Princess Leia projection.*

Nygaard: *It is pretty much a dream project to be able to work on. It is exciting to work on things that have not been done before.*

Wesley Rogers: *As a primarily undergraduate team doing this project, there is a big learning curve, right? It was something that has just never been done before. That was really the biggest struggle. We were taking science fiction and trying to bring it into the real world.*

Nygaard: *And definitely it took a lot of patience and hard work—a lot of hours spent in a dark room with lasers trying to get things to work right.*

Rogers: *As we got deeper and deeper into the project, you would google something and there was no answer. You would read research documents from around the world, and you would realize that nobody knew the answers and that you had to go find them.*

Smalley: *We have created a display that is very much like the displays of science fiction.*

Nygaard: *We are actually using a laser beam to trap a particle, and then we can move that particle and create the image.*

Smalley: *This display is like a 3-D printer for light. You are actually printing an object in space with these little particles. The future won't be the future without a Princess Leia projector, and this can make that a reality.*

Rogers: *We have finally been able to culminate all those years of work into a publication in the journal Nature, which is one of the really prestigious journals.*

Nygaard: *Right after we got published, we could see articles popping up on websites worldwide.*

BBC World News reporter: *A team at Brigham Young University in America, who have used a color laser and dust particles to create images that float in the air . . .*

Rogers: *Different news stations picking it up. It felt like it was everywhere.*

Smalley: *I definitely believe all researchers need to have a quest. They need to identify something they really want to build or some group of people that they really want to help. And then that type of quest becomes a context for their education and for their work. And that is the foundation for making cool things happen.*

Nygaard: *He [Smalley] is willing to kind of take risks on students, and he is also encouraging of exploring and setting your sights high. Undergraduates are definitely valued here, and there is a big focus on allowing undergraduates to get into research. And I think for me, that was really a big formative experience in my undergraduate education.*

Smalley: *I think all inspiration comes from the same source of all good. I am not sure how much Heavenly Father cares about 3-dimensional imagery, but I appreciate that He values our personal voyages of discovery and that He wants to help us be successful.²⁵*

At the top of the pyramid is something that both elevates as well as balances and centers our love of students and our love of a subject. It is the most important factor of all in our quest for a Zion university: love of the Savior, including love of the truths of His restored gospel. Love of the Savior and the principles of His gospel can enrich and elevate both our love of the things we study and our love of the students we teach.

Again, President Tanner elaborated:

The gospel provided essential perspective on my discipline. . . . It also instilled in me the desire to diligently seek truth to become more like God, whose glory “is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth” (D&C 93:36).²⁶

Love of the Savior and the truths of His restored gospel not only increases our love of our subjects of study but also increases our love for the students. As President Tanner added:

[It helps us see] students for who they really are: . . . children of a Father in Heaven . . . needing to become more like Him on their journey home.²⁷

This in turn can enrich and elevate our desire and ability to help our students learn essential truths about our subjects and about their divine potential.

Our love for the Savior and His gospel can transform everything for us, including our ability to find both new insights and new ways to share those insights. Again, let me give one illustrative example, representative of so many on this campus, that demonstrates what it can look like when there is a love of subject, a love of students, and a reverence and love for God. This is a video featuring Professor Julie Crockett from the BYU Department of Mechanical Engineering [a video was shown]:

I teach courses in fluid dynamics and thermodynamics, and I do research in that area as well. Personally, I enjoy being somewhat contemplative.

So there was a particular tree outside of my house, and I loved to just climb up the tree, sit on a branch, just look around me, wonder what was going on around me, and think about the different things in the sky and the tree I was sitting in.

My father was in the air force, so we got to see a lot of flybys—a lot of jet planes basically. I always thought it was amazing. You have this huge hunk of metal that is flying in the air. How is that even possible? I have always kind of felt like I didn’t quite know enough. I always wanted to know more.

So I would learn how a plane flew, and that is great. But now I want to know, how can I make it even better? There was definitely a time a few years into my PhD program that I just wondered, “Do I know enough to do this?” I am supposed to be finding out something that no one else has ever done. I am supposed to be doing this completely new research and become an expert in an area that other people have been working in for thirty years. And it was hard. I thought, “I don’t know if I am smart enough to do this.” But it was like anything else: we have the capability to do anything we want to do.

I love seeing other students love fluids as much as I do. I find it so fun, and there is always so much more to learn. And it is so enjoyable for me to see that in other students and to get them to say, “Wait a minute. Fluids. I was drinking water this morning, and that is a fluid. And part of it stuck on my cup. That is really weird. I wonder why it didn’t fall. I wonder if I used a glass cup if it would move differently.”

Just little things like that where they start to see it in their everyday lives is so fun for me, because then I feel like, “Hey, they are catching this!”

So one of the reasons that I chose BYU is because of the opportunity to be both a Saint and a scholar. If you are working hard, the Spirit will help bring forth to your mind an idea that doesn’t come from any of my background. It doesn’t come necessarily from any other learning that I have had. It is just a prompting from the Spirit to try something new or to try something different that might seem crazy and that I am sure is not something I could have come up with on my own. I also recognize that I have to put forth the effort to have the ability to understand those promptings, but I know that they are promptings from the Spirit.

If you look at how aerodynamic things are shaped, like airplanes, and then look at something such as a bird or a fish or something that needs to be aerodynamic and needs to fly, what we have done as people is try to engineer things that look like nature—nature that our Heavenly Father created. And I love being able to make that connection in class, because then students start to look at nature differently as well and think, “This was engineered—by the best engineer ever.”

Admittedly, I did still climb a tree just last week and sit up in the tree. It gave me the opportunity to pause and to have the time to feel the Spirit to help lead me forward toward my education and the interest in research I have now. I truly believe that a part of our gospel is education—and not just classic education as in book learning and going to class, but learning. We are all working toward becoming more like our Heavenly Father.²⁸

A university shaped by the love of God, which in turn enhances the love of subject and the love of students, can become a Zion university, a university in which in this critical respect we are of one heart and one mind. As President Bateman explained:

In our context, a Zion university is a community of righteous scholars and students searching for truth for the purpose of educating the whole person.²⁹

And, I would add, it is a community motivated by charity, the pure love of Christ—both His love for us and our love for Him.

Changing Lives in Powerful Ways

Because it is based on unique principles, a Zion university will be different from other universities in many ways. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell once observed, “A unique Church deserves a unique university!”³⁰ On some matters, we will have to rely on our own standards and measures because the world will not value—or sometimes even understand—the things that are central to our endeavor. But that, too, is additional evidence that we are on the right track, for modern-day scriptures make it clear that, in the long run, “the inhabitants of Zion shall judge all things pertaining to Zion.”³¹ Thus we must be prepared to evaluate our work in new ways. I am grateful for the many conversations that have occurred in this past year about how to describe, encourage, and incentivize student-centered research in all of our disciplines. That is a Zion-like effort.

We must be careful, however, that our search for new standards does not cause us to do less than our best work. Being unique does not excuse us from producing world-class scholarship and creative works. I wholeheartedly join Elder Maxwell, who stated that his

*expectations for this institution . . . [included] not only teaching “out of the best books,” but also having its faculty and graduates **write** some of the best books! Likewise, not only are BYU’s students to be helped to appreciate and to enjoy great music, but they and some of the faculty and graduates are to **compose** some of it!³²*

As Elder Maxwell also observed, “Only an excellent university can really help the Church much. Mediocrity won’t do either academically or spiritually.”³³

Loving our students, loving our subjects, and loving the Savior are not tasks that are

limited to faculty members. Everyone on campus has a role to play in creating this Zion-like community. An exhibit in the Education in Zion gallery in the Joseph F. Smith Building describes one example. It tells the story of Delbert Brigham Brown, who “grew up in Mexico as a rough-edged rancher and farmer.”³⁴ He was not particularly active in the Church. As his life changed, he moved his family to Provo so his children could attend BYU, where he gained employment as the custodian of the Smith Fieldhouse. In that setting, “he became the confidant and counselor of many students,”³⁵ some of whom worked for him and some who did not. The exhibit describes several instances in which Brother Brown taught, mentored, and loved the students. I share just two.

One day Delbert found a purse containing cigarettes and a gold lighter. The young woman who came to claim it wept when he told her the story of a young man who “took up with some [bad] habits” but with help overcame them; it was . . . his own story in disguise. Delbert told her that she could have “the cream of the campus” for her friends and future husband, if she would only try. About three years later, following a devotional, a young woman asked him if he remembered the girl with the cigarettes. “I am that girl,” she said, “and I am going to be married in the temple next month.”³⁶

On another occasion, at a time when registration for classes at BYU took place in the Smith Fieldhouse, [an international student who had come to BYU from the Middle East] stepped into Delbert’s small office [during registration with a question]. “What does one do when . . . his money is all gone and he finds out he is short ten dollars for a class . . . that he has to have?” Delbert later wrote, “As I looked at that young fellow, I thought, ‘How many thousand miles away from . . . home are you . . . ? Just who can you turn to?’ And so I said, ‘Well, I guess you will just have to find a friend. . . .’ And he said, ‘I have no friend. I know

[nobody].’ . . . I took out . . . a ten-dollar bill . . . ([even though] I never carry that kind of money) and handed it to him. He . . . said, ‘Why do you do this? You don’t even know my name.’ And I simply gave him the [only] answer I had: ‘. . . All students at [BYU] are my friends.’”³⁷

Persons filled with the love of Christ can teach and change lives in powerful ways, no matter what other specific roles they play.

Keeping Our Professional Pyramid in Balance

To achieve our goal to create the unique combination of love of student, love of subject, and love of the Savior that creates a Zion-like atmosphere, we will all likely need to change—to repent, if you will. We will all likely need to view things a little differently than we have before—maybe even reorient ourselves a bit. We may have to go through the kind of experience that J. Reuben Clark Jr. did.

Most of us know J. Reuben Clark Jr. as a faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who served as a member of the First Presidency for nearly three decades. Many will also be familiar with a number of his key teachings, which continue to resonate in the hearts and souls of many in the Church today, including this oft-quoted observation:

In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines.³⁸

In part because our law school bears his name, many will also recognize that President Clark was an outstanding lawyer before he began his service as a member of the First Presidency. There is a great lesson to be learned from his transition from his secular legal and diplomatic work to his Church work, a lesson that is both helpful in understanding President Clark’s teaching on how we respond to callings

in the Church and illuminating in the kind of hearts—and humility—we must have if we are to be fully successful in our efforts to build and advance the cause of Zion on this campus.

A bit of background and biography provides both context for the main point as well as a few intervening lessons of their own.

J. Reuben Clark Jr. grew up in the small community of Grantsville, Utah. From an early age he demonstrated a deep love of learning. He attended the eighth grade in Grantsville three times—not because he was a slow learner but because he loved learning, and eighth grade was the highest grade available in that small community at that time. He went back because he wanted to learn as much as he could, even if it meant repeating the subjects he had studied before.³⁹

An insight into the depth of his love for learning, and how early in his life it was manifested, comes from three entries in the journal of Reuben's father, Joshua—entries made in the middle of the winter of 1884, when Reuben was twelve years old:

Monday

A very stormy morning. Snowing and the wind blowing from the north. Snow drifting. We advised the children not to go to school. Reuben thought he could stand it and so went. Edwin and Elmer remained at home.

Tuesday

A bitter cold morning. I think that we are now having the coldest weather that I ever experienced in the month of February. The boys started to school this morning, but it was so cold and stormy that we called . . . them back. Reuben had got out of hearing. Edwin and Elmer remained at home.

Wednesday

The weather was extremely cold last night and this morning. . . . We thought it was too cold to send Edwin and Elmer to school today, but Reuben would rather miss his meals than to miss a day from school.⁴⁰

That is love of learning.

At age nineteen, Reuben made his way to Salt Lake City, seeking to go beyond his eighth-grade education. He enrolled at what was then called the LDS College. But during his first semester, he caught the attention of the principal, James E. Talmage, who offered him a job working full-time at the new Deseret Museum, where Talmage had just been appointed curator.⁴¹ Reuben dropped out of school and took the job.

Four years later, Talmage was named president of the University of Utah, and the museum and Reuben went with him. Needing to support his father's missionary service, Reuben continued working full-time,⁴² yet he graduated as valedictorian of his graduating class. Shortly thereafter, at the age of twenty-seven, Reuben married Luacine Savage. They moved to Heber City, where Reuben had accepted a job teaching at the new high school in town.

Reuben taught school in various places in Utah for the next five years, but he felt early on that there was more to learn both academically and professionally. Over time he developed an interest in the law, but with a wife and a daughter to support, law school attendance seemed out of the question. When a generous benefactor offered to pay for law school, Reuben, Luacine, and their family headed off to New York City so that, at the age of thirty-two, Reuben could study law at Columbia University.

Reuben's love for learning and his penchant for hard work quickly manifested themselves in law school. As described by one biographer:

When given an assignment [in law school, Reuben] did far more than brief a case or two in the customary fashion; he hounded the errant problem back into its past, rooting through precedents, commentaries, ancillary discussions, and anything else he could find. Then, amid a chaos of notes, citations, and open books piled high, he observed step by step how the matter had come into being.

*It was a principle of life as well as a principle of law, he concluded, that one knew what to do next only when one knew what had gone before.*⁴³

Reuben loved learning deeply. He was clearly in his element, and he was flourishing.

Luacine, not so much. Although she and Reuben loved each other deeply, she missed her family and Salt Lake City. Again, in the words of Reuben's biographer:

*Her two young daughters were more than a handful. Her husband was scarcely ever home. . . . Recreation was virtually nonexistent. Luacine kept a calendar and drew X's across it as the weeks passed by. She was like a prisoner awaiting parole.*⁴⁴

One gets the sense from this and other incidents that Reuben's love for learning at times left him a bit unbalanced, despite his deep love for Luacine.

While the plans were to return to Salt Lake City after law school, those plans changed when Reuben received an offer from one of his professors who had just been appointed solicitor for the State Department. The professor asked Reuben to serve as assistant solicitor—a job out of law school that few could dream of and one that was too good for one who loved the law to pass up. So the Clarks moved to Washington, DC, for what they thought would be a few years' stint. Luacine traveled with the children to Utah every summer, hoping that Reuben would someday accompany them permanently. However, Reuben's success soon brought other opportunities that were also too good to pass up, in his view.

In the third summer, Luacine could see the writing on the wall, and she wrote to Reuben from Salt Lake City: "It is needless for me to say how I dislike living in Washington . . . , but if you intend to live on there, I will go just as soon as the weather will permit."⁴⁵ Again, one wonders if Reuben's love for learning and the joy that he derived from that caused him to

pay less attention to other things he loved—a mistake that some of us may make if we do not keep all aspects of our professional pyramid in balance.

Several months later, Reuben was jolted when Luacine fell ill. For a few hours she literally hovered between life and death. Something about that event changed Reuben, as he realized the anchor that Luacine was in his life, and he began to bring more balance to his life. As his biographer noted, "His days at the office grew perceptibly shorter, while evenings at home lengthened. He learned, in fact, to do much of his work in a private study upstairs, . . . [sometimes with] his infant son propped on the desk."⁴⁶

As a result of his increasingly balanced focus, Reuben and Luacine came closer to an agreement as to their situation, and Reuben flourished even more. A few years later, Reuben resigned from the State Department, where he had eventually served as the solicitor, and he started up a private law practice in Washington, DC. He eventually opened a second office in New York City and then one in Salt Lake City, where he returned more permanently in 1923 at the age of fifty-two.

Because of his love of learning and his love for his wife and family, Reuben made a deep and important impact on the lives of many. During his time back East, he in many ways connected the Church back to the rest of America. In the eyes of most Americans at the time, members of the Church of Jesus Christ were oddities, if not outcasts. Reuben arrived in Washington in the midst of the Smoot hearings, when Congress was seriously debating whether a leader in the Church was fit to serve as a senator. Yet Reuben was so bright and so good that people kept coming to him for advice and with requests for service, even after he had returned to Utah. In 1928, President Calvin Coolidge appointed him as under-secretary of state, and in 1930, Reuben was appointed as the U.S. ambassador to Mexico.

At the time of his appointment as ambassador, this was one of the premier and most sensitive State Department appointments.

Given that important position, it would have been natural to think that Reuben had reached the summit of his life's work—one in which his love of learning and his love for his wife and family had led him to his life's purpose. At the end of his book entitled *J. Reuben Clark: The Public Years*, author Frank W. Fox described a scene at the embassy in Mexico that summed up what J. Reuben Clark's life looked like at this stage of his career:

It was . . . an early evening at the embassy in the twilight of autumn. The Clarks were preparing to entertain. Servants were still bustling around starchily. . . . Reuben, resplendent in his Prince Albert, had paused in the [hall] to fumble with an errant cufflink when he looked through the vaulted archway to see what he described as an apparition. It was Luacine Savage Clark, standing in a floor-length blue gown, arranging some . . . lilies on the piano—easily at that moment the most beautiful woman on earth.

This, Reuben told himself, was it. For this he had slaved and sacrificed his entire life. For this he had gone to the Grantsville eighth grade over and over again, and then to the university, and then to Columbia law school, and then to the State Department. This was the dream that lay behind those endless pilgrimages back and forth across the continent, that had taken him in and out of public service, in and out of private practice, up and down through boom and bust. . . . Here was the imposing mansion. Here was the well-stocked library with its crackling hearth. Here was the man of account and here were people coming to honor him. And here, vastly more important than all else, was the woman whose sacrifice, whose gallantry, whose quiet self-abnegation had made it all possible.⁴⁷

It seemed at this point that J. Reuben Clark in his early sixties had arrived at what was his life's calling. It all made sense.

But even though he was in his sixties, Reuben's life course was about to change dramatically—precipitated by the passing in December 1931 of Charles W. Nibley, second counselor in the First Presidency of the Church.

Later that month, two of the Clarks' daughters were visiting their parents in Mexico just before Christmas. As one of them searched through the day's mail, she noticed a letter from the First Presidency. Jokingly, Louise said to her father, "It's for you from President Grant. . . . He is probably asking you to be his counselor."⁴⁸ The entire family joined in the laughter. Reuben had never been a stake president; he had never been a bishop. He was not even a high priest. He seemed one of the most unlikely choices for such service.

So everyone laughed—except Reuben. He took the letter, put it in his coat pocket, and, "when conversation seemed to lag, he excused himself, went to his study, and locked the door."⁴⁹ Reuben read the letter. It opened by noting President Nibley's death and then stated, "After prayerful consideration our minds definitely revert to you as the man whom the Lord desires to fill this vacancy."⁵⁰

This was a bolt out of the blue for Reuben. After regaining his composure, he drafted not a letter but what he entitled a "Memorandum of Explanation." In it, Reuben explained the nature of his current assignment as ambassador, the fact that there were sensitive ongoing negotiations with Mexico, and his fears that President Herbert Hoover and Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson might consider him a deserter if he resigned at that time. He then wrote a cover letter that stated:

You Brethren must have an enormous amount of work and be in need of help, so much so that you will not care to postpone filling the vacancy for an indefinite time.

. . . I can conceive that, if you think it best not to give opportunity for irritation [to President Hoover

*and Secretary Stimson] through my leaving before they desire it, you may wish—instead of waiting for me—to fill the vacancy by appointing some one else. If you take this view, I hope you will feel entirely free to act.*⁵¹

As another of President Clark’s biographers explained:

*It was a supreme example of J. Reuben Clark’s diplomacy: he had not actually declined the invitation to become a counselor in the First Presidency, in fact, he had even expressed gratitude for their confidence in him, but he had presented the situation in terms that would probably lead President Grant to choose another man as counselor rather than wait for Ambassador Clark to complete his work in Mexico.*⁵²

Reuben did not send the memorandum at that time. He took the memorandum and cover letter and left them in a locked drawer. He then joined the family for Christmas Eve celebrations without informing them of the contents of the letter. A few days later, Reuben took the papers from the drawer, reread them, and wrote a different letter to the First Presidency—one that contained echoes of his later teaching about accepting callings and serving in the Church:

I have never aspired to Church office—its honor and dignity I appreciated, but its responsibilities seemed too grave. I do not now so aspire. . . .

But when, as now, a call comes from my superior officers, . . . acting under the inspiration of the Lord, then I, responsive to my training and my faith, must answer to the call, not only as a clear duty but as a great privilege.

It is for the Lord to say how and where I shall serve. I trust Him to help me meet the responsibilities of my task.⁵³

In the words of Clark biographer D. Michael Quinn, “This letter was from [Reuben’s] heart.

. . . The other letter and memorandum were from his head and the lifelong strivings to succeed in a world that could not comprehend him.”⁵⁴ Reuben’s heart prevailed over his head.

Prior to his call as a member of the First Presidency, J. Reuben Clark had accomplished much in his life, propelled forward by his love of learning and his love of his spouse and family. Over time he flourished even more as he properly balanced those two loves. However, even though he thought he had accomplished all he could, he suddenly found a new level of success, a new kind of challenge—one that transformed what he thought were his prior accomplishments into mere preparation for greater things that were to come, as he came to see his life work in an entirely new way. As he focused on the top of the pyramid—on his love of the Savior—everything appeared in a new light.

Now, none of us are likely to have as dramatic a paradigm shift as J. Reuben Clark experienced, but if we are to not only fit into but help create a more Zion-like university, all of us will need to view our careers more with our hearts—filled with love, including the love of God—and a little less with strivings to succeed in a world that may not comprehend us.

This is not a simple task. It requires not only that we collectively be of one heart and one mind but also that our hearts be pure. “For this is Zion—the pure in heart.”⁵⁵ We will each need to change to some degree; we will each need to be better. We will each need to work harder. We will each need to be more spiritual. But the good news of the gospel is that we can change, we can improve, and we can become better, holier people. And as we do so, our efforts will inspire and improve those around us. This is the purpose of our mortal experience. Thus, as we strive to become a Zion university, we will be fulfilling our essential mission to assist individuals—others around us and ourselves included—in our quest for perfection and eternal life.

I love this university. I love the cause in which it allows us to be engaged. And I love you. I believe with all my heart that as we orient our minds and hearts toward the Lord, as we knit our hearts together in love, and as we make our hearts pure, we will be part of the effort that will cause Zion to be “far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind.” May that be our destiny is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. John Taylor, *JD* 21:100 (13 April 1879); quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” BYU devotional address, 10 October 1975.
2. Kimball, “The Second Century.”
3. D&C 97:3.
4. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “A School in Zion,” BYU annual university conference address, 22 August 1988; see also excerpted text in John W. Welch and Don E. Norton, eds., *Educating Zion* (Provo: BYU Studies, 1996), 142–64.
5. Holland, “School in Zion”; see also excerpted text, Welch and Norton, *Educating Zion*, 146.
6. See Merrill J. Bateman, “A Zion University,” BYU devotional address, 9 January 1996.
7. See Merrill J. Bateman, “A Zion University and the Search for Truth,” BYU annual university conference address, 25 August 1997.
8. D&C 6:6.
9. See Moses 7:62–64.
10. Moses 7:18.
11. 2 Nephi 26:29.
12. 2 Nephi 26:31; emphasis added.
13. 2 Nephi 26:30.
14. Mosiah 18:21.
15. Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989.
16. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, book 3, chapter 8, paragraph 3.
17. John S. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur on Academic Excellence,” BYU annual university conference address to the faculty, 24 August 2004.
18. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur.”
19. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur.”
20. Byron J. Adams, in *A Thing of Beauty: Antarctic Worm*, video, *BYU Magazine*, 5 September 2018, [youtube.com/watch?v=ZEFIntZJGow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEFIntZJGow).
21. Renata T. Forste, in *A Thing of Beauty: A Girl in School*, video, *BYU Magazine*, 29 August 2018, [youtube.com/watch?v=J6RrPKQv-AA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6RrPKQv-AA).
22. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur.”
23. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur.”
24. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur.”
25. Daniel E. Smalley, Erich J. Nygaard, and R. Wesley Rogers, in *Star Wars and Sci-Fi Inspire Learning at BYU*, video, featured in Natalie Ipson, “Become Zion Through Love and Learning, President Worthen Directs,” *Intellect*, *BYU News*, 27 August 2018, news.byu.edu/news/become-zion-through-love-and-learning-president-worthen-directs.
26. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur.”
27. Tanner, “Notes from an Amateur.”
28. Julie Crockett, *Julie: Making Connections*, video from *By Study, By Faith: Choosing a Good Part*, web series, *BYU Theatre and Media Arts and BYU Faculty Women’s Association*, 2015 (see film-old.byu.edu/home/fwa), featured in Ipson, “Become Zion Through Love and Learning.”
29. Bateman, “Zion University.”
30. Neal A. Maxwell, “Out of the Best Faculty,” BYU annual university conference address to the faculty, 26 August 1993.
31. D&C 64:38.
32. Maxwell, “Out of the Best Faculty”; emphasis in original; quoting D&C 88:118.
33. Maxwell, “Out of the Best Faculty.”
34. “Delbert Brigham Brown,” *Education in Zion* exhibit text, May 2010, *Brigham Young University*, 139, educationinzion.byu.edu/wp

-content/uploads/2010/05/Education-in-Zion-Text.pdf.

35. "Delbert Brown," 139.
36. "Delbert Brown," 139; text modernized.
37. "Delbert Brown," 139; text modernized.
38. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *CR*, April 1951, 154; quoted in D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1983), 123.
39. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. explained his repeating the grade two times: "I was not quite that dull, but there was nothing to do, so I went to school in the winter time and went over the same ground" (quoted in Frank W. Fox, *J. Reuben Clark, Jr.: The Public Years* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980], 11).
40. Joshua R. Clark, journal, vol. 10 (11, 12, 13 February 1884); quoted in David H. Yarn Jr., *Young Reuben: The Early Life of J. Reuben Clark, Jr.* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1973), 51–52.
41. See Fox, *Public Years*, 13.
42. "Working ten hours a day and six days a week" (Fox, *Public Years*, 15).

43. Fox, *Public Years*, 34.
44. Fox, *Public Years*, 37.
45. Letter from Luacine Savage Clark to J. Reuben Clark Jr., 30 April 1909; quoted in Fox, *Public Years*, 374.
46. Fox, *Public Years*, 375.
47. Fox, *Public Years*, 583.
48. Quinn, *Church Years*, 37–38.
49. Quinn, *Church Years*, 38.
50. Letter from Heber J. Grant and Anthony W. Ivins to J. Reuben Clark Jr., 19 December 1931; quoted in Quinn, *Church Years*, 39.
51. Letter from J. Reuben Clark Jr. to Heber J. Grant and Anthony W. Ivins, 19 [sic] December 1931; quoted in Quinn, *Church Years*, 39.
52. Quinn, *Church Years*, 39–40.
53. Letter from J. Reuben Clark Jr. to Heber J. Grant and Anthony W. Ivins, 28 December 1931; emphasis added. Quoted in Quinn, *Church Years*, 40.
54. Quinn, *Church Years*, 40.
55. D&C 97:21.