

Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve

A. ELAINE BOND

Thank you for that wonderful music. The message of uplifting music is surely one of the reasons for us to attend devotionals each week.

I'm pleased to be with you students, faculty, staff, and guests. It is an honor to meet with you and have the privilege and opportunity to speak with you. However, it takes family and friends to put things in proper perspective. My grandson Ben said this morning, "Why, you're famous!" and my son Robert said, "If you're dull and boring, I'm going to get under the seat!" Michael Hunter from KBYU said, "Don't worry about it. If you go over, they'll just leave." Within that context, you may feel free to do any of the above.

I do not know why I was selected to deliver a devotional address, but I do know the message I am supposed to share with you. I have prayed fervently that as I speak with you the Spirit might help us share the feelings and the thoughts I want to express.

My experiences as a trauma and disaster nurse have been challenging and rewarding. I love the stimulation and excitement of saving a life in the face of overwhelming odds or following a serious accident or illness when a patient is on a ventilator, has many vasoactive IV fluids to maintain blood pressure, and

requires numerous interventions to correct or maintain homeostasis. I love the detective work of determining the physiological responses to the terrible stimuli we humans manage to exert on each other and then helping patients recover. I love to bring order out of chaos when there has been a natural or man-made disaster.

However, as I tell my critical-care students, no patient ever comes back and says, "Thank you for knowing how to read my pulmonary artery catheter values and how to titrate my medications accordingly" or "Thank you for knowing why I am crashing when my lab values are out of whack and knowing which medications will fix the problem."

What they do say is, "Do you remember that night when I was so scared and you put your arms around me" or "Do you remember how you comforted me as I had that terrible procedure done?" These are the times when I feel the most validation for my interaction with patients. Now as I guide such experiences for my nursing students, I also think that these are some of the reasons Heavenly Father guided me to do what I do and to be where I am.

A. Elaine Bond was a BYU associate professor of nursing when this devotional address was given on 1 July 2003.

Please join me in thinking back to how you felt when you knew you were coming to Brigham Young University—the excitement, the fear and trepidation, and the witness of wonderful things to come, even as you knew you would leave your comfort zone. I remember well my feelings of that day. I was a struggling student at the University of Utah at the time, weighed down by all the life events that are overwhelming some of you: working, studying, trying to be a good parent, and never having enough time, sleep, or money. As I was wont to do, I went to the Salt Lake Temple for solace and guidance. On my way I encountered a neighbor with whom I was teaching Gospel Doctrine in the Colonial Hills Second Ward. In the middle of our conversation, with me grumbling about the heavy load I was carrying and the good brother consoling me, he stopped midsentence and half-jokingly said, “Who knows? Maybe you will teach nursing at BYU.”

There was an immediate, overwhelming confirmation through the Spirit that I would indeed come here.

Years later as I entered the west entrance of the Brigham Young University campus for the first time as a new faculty member—totally out of my comfort zone—I felt the challenge of the signs there: Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve. Each time I pass through those gates I am reminded of the importance of that injunction, why I chose the profession I did, and why I am at BYU. I hope you periodically take time as well to reevaluate your reasons for being here.

Many Church leaders and former presidents of Brigham Young University have discussed the reasons for the existence of BYU. In a faculty workshop, former BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson stated:

At BYU we have a twofold responsibility—a grave responsibility which demands a great deal of our faculty and staff:

1. Proper academic development—to meet the tests and challenges of the world.

2. Proper spiritual development—to meet the basic inner needs of the student, and to help him understand his relationship to his fellow men and to God, the Heavenly Father. [“The Calling of BYU,” address given at the BYU annual faculty workshop, 18 September 1962, 7; see also John W. Welch and Don E. Norton, *Educating Zion* (Provo: BYU Studies, 1996), 33]

In his first devotional as president of Brigham Young University, Elder Merrill J. Bateman recounted an experience in 1975 of looking over those present at a multistake fireside in the Marriott Center. His eyes came to rest on about 2,500 missionaries from the MTC all seated together. He recalled:

I looked at them and realized that within weeks they would be scattered to the four corners of the globe. . . .

Then a flash of inspiration opened my mind as to the purpose of Brigham Young University. I realized that [the] students were being prepared to enter the world. . . . The BYU families would be good neighbors; have strong relationships with business associates; and, if well-trained, be leaders in their communities. [Merrill J. Bateman, “A Zion University,” *BYU 1995–96 Speeches* (Provo: BYU, 1996), 129–30]

Elder Bateman explained:

As almost everyone here knows, the word Zion in Latter-day Saint literature refers to the “pure in heart” or the “place where the pure in heart dwell.” A Zion people are of one heart and one mind—they dwell in righteousness and have no poor among them. . . . 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. [“A Zion University,” 126]

Most of you already belong to one of the two greatest forces for good on the face of the earth—the priesthood or the Relief Society. In the Church handbook we read, “The priesthood should be exercised in a spirit of love with a

desire to serve and bless others” (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998], 161). “The purpose of Relief Society is to assist priesthood leaders in carrying out the mission of the Church by helping sisters and families come unto Christ” (*Church Handbook*, 193). “Taking individual responsibility for spiritual well-being and temporal welfare has always been part of gospel living. One purpose of the Church is to help members fulfill these responsibilities. Priesthood leaders, auxiliary leaders, home teachers, and visiting teachers have important roles in this effort” (*Church Handbook*, 255). While you are at BYU, you have numerous opportunities to participate in these activities, with powerful role models who have years of experience.

In section 29 of the Doctrine and Covenants, after having discussed spiritual and temporal work, the Lord says, “Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal”—meaning even temporal laws are designed to fulfill spiritual purposes (D&C 29:34).

The purpose then of Brigham Young University is to be a microcosm of the Church. As we contemplate all these concepts, we can see how a Brigham Young University education prepares us for numerous roles.

So we “enter to learn” and then “go forth to serve.” If indeed we want to become a Zion people, our academic and spiritual efforts at Brigham Young University must be melded into our personal and professional lives. Regardless of our chosen professions, we can provide service. In analyzing and evaluating our interactions with others, we discover the values that really motivate our lives. Such an example and an examination can be a springboard for change and growth.

I would like to tell you the stories of three groups who really went forth to serve. The first

story I want to share occurred in the fall of 2001. On September 11, I, like you, had a full schedule. When the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked, I was on a leave of absence from Brigham Young University for the block, ready to return to Amman, Jordan, as cochair of a Middle Eastern international nursing conference and to complete a research project. Since I obviously could not go to Jordan, and I had no classes to teach, I was able to go to Washington, D.C., as a Red Cross disaster nurse.

Working there with other relief workers and the community at large was a Zion experience for me. I witnessed the selflessness of many people. Spontaneous acts of kindness abounded all around us. When we went shopping for items for our clients, store owners would not take our money, parking lot attendants refused to let us pay, and people approached us on the street to offer money or blood. Obviously we could take neither, but we gave them the addresses of local Red Cross chapters.

One of my roles was to work with burn patients and their families at Arlington Hospital, at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and at Washington General. As I interviewed patients from the Pentagon and families connected to the events, I heard the heroic stories of dramatic rescues—some of which you saw on television. I watched as a small, dainty woman with two fractured legs was reunited with the young man who caught her when she jumped out of a two-story window. He received the greater of the injuries. I saw an uninjured survivor hug her rescuer, who had burns from the tips of her fingers to the tops of her shoulders. I watched survivors’ families support the families of those who had died. All the time I was there I thought of the scripture from Moses 7:18: “And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.” When I looked up that scripture recently, I found a footnote that referred the reader to “unity” in the Topical Guide. Interestingly enough, the

name of our operation at the Pentagon was Camp Unity.

As you know, people all over the United States pulled together during that terrible time. Schoolchildren sent thousands of cards and letters that we delivered to families and survivors. We shared the cards with them, and as tears welled up in their eyes, they remarked, “I can’t believe so many people care.” A feeling of unity pervaded the atmosphere as everyone worked together, relentlessly. As one seasoned firefighter put it, “We think we’re the ones who ‘make it all right.’ It didn’t take us many minutes to realize we couldn’t make this one all right.”

We held nightly nondenominational prayer meetings to help us make it better. Local Afghan Muslims organized an interfaith service at the Lincoln Memorial, where beautiful unifying messages were given by Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and other religious leaders. As the darkness deepened, everyone sang “God Bless America” while group members carried a giant U.S. flag down to the reflecting pool and we held lighted candles aloft. In the shadow of the monument to a remarkable president who wanted to ensure freedom for all, the symbolism of this event did not escape us. No one wanted to leave when the service was over. We walked around chatting with people we had never met, hugging perfect strangers, and sharing our rich ethnic and cultural diversity. It was truly one moment in time when we felt a healing unity. Of such is Zion made.

The second story is not quite so dramatic, but it is an excellent example of what can happen when people choose to serve each other. In an area largely uninhabited along the banks of Utah’s Jordan River, a new community began—first a home here, then a home there. The people who came to this community had a variety of backgrounds. They came from many places and ranged in age from newlyweds to some who were considerably older who had lived in their previous homes for up to 40 years. Stepping out of their comfort zones, they left their former

friends and associates behind and formed new relationships. They helped each other build houses; they helped put in sprinkler systems and yards; they worked together to decorate the interiors of their houses. They shared in births, weddings, tragedies, and deaths. Most of them also worshiped together, which helped them unite even more. Through their service to each other they became very close. In fact, one of them called their settlement “The Magic Kingdom,” and the name stuck because of the spirit of unity the inhabitants felt.

As the tide of new homes and new arrivals began to ebb, the people began to turn their attention to outside activities. A wise Relief Society president guided them to extend their service to other people far away. They sent clothing and supplies with a missionary couple from their midst to Primary children in Africa. They provided fruits and vegetables, paper, crayons, and toys for children in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. Numerous Eagle Scout projects provided supplies to citizens in far-off lands.

The entire ward participated in a yearlong humanitarian project. Each month they gathered materials for hygiene kits. The Primary children gathered toothbrushes. The Young Men and Young Women gathered combs. The high priest and elders quorums gathered toothpaste. Each month during Home, Family, and Personal Enrichment evening, the sisters made quilts, hats, mittens, dolls, balls, and tropical bandages. Just before Thanksgiving last year, the Relief Society sisters gathered to assemble the hygiene kits. They discovered they had produced 1,001 hygiene kits, 25 quilts, and untold numbers of dolls, balls, books, and tropical bandages. Their feelings of love and unity in their magic kingdom—i.e., Zion—swelled to a powerful spiritual experience as they rejoiced in their ability to love and serve others. Not only had they begun a Zion society, but they helped others experience it also. Even at this very moment—as we’re in this devotional—they are supporting a member

of that ward through the loss of a dear one and the funeral.

The third story I want to share is about Brigham Young University nursing students whom I accompanied for a service/learning semester in Amman, Jordan. I will let the students tell you part of their story through journal entries made as they worked in a government hospital, in the community schools, and in a Palestinian refugee camp.

Faten is a five-month-old infant. When I met Faten she was still struggling. She seemed so distant. Faten was in a corner in a barren room, trapped in an isolette. . . . Because of this she was never held during feeding; she was a poor sucker. She was never held and rarely received physical contact. No wonder her chart said she had brain atrophy. She had no stimulation! I knew I could make a difference. . . . We decided to hold Faten and Ahmed. They needed touch! [Jennifer Cowser]

One of the nurses (our favorite one) came and started to help us when we gave the children their baths. She got us all the supplies and was excited to watch us clean the children. Both Faten and Ahmed needed their heads cleaned. We scrubbed them, and they looked—and I'm sure felt—so much better. A few days later the nurse said Faten was going home because her sucking was much better. I really feel that we helped her. It is very exciting to see progress in the children. [Tiffany Hobbs]

I loved how creative the people in my [community] group were. They put so much work into their health presentations. When they taught the boys about health, they made posters, did role-playing, and involved the boys by asking them questions and having them put things on posters. The boys loved this. They paid attention to the health lessons, and they all wanted to be involved. [Marquell Wilkinson]

Checking blood sugar among children who had never been tested required creative thinking to do

the finger sticks. The BYU students first had to draw their own blood to develop [the children's] trust.

The BYU students worked through the Jordan River Foundation to direct at-risk children in learning activities four days a week at Jabal al Nasser, a Palestinian refugee camp.

We have taught the kids about wound care, dental care, nutrition, exercise, diabetes, and emotions. I really feel like they have learned what we have been trying to teach. [Laura Murphy]

I have to say this has been one of my most favorite activities we have participated in here in Jordan. I know we are making a difference. These children are so amazing to me. They obviously do not live under the best conditions, but they are happy and so well behaved. . . . What does the future hold for these children? I don't know, but I know that we are able to brighten their lives each time we are with them, and my prayers will be with them always. [Melissa Everton]

All in all, the most important thing I learned from my time at Jabal al Nasser is that love is the universal language. Even if they cannot understand what we are saying, these children know we . . . love them. They feel comfortable with us. . . . We have helped these children find a haven—a place they can come to where they feel adored. We hope they can understand, even in a small way, that they are of infinite worth. [Heidi Thyre]

This experience has had a lasting influence on these former students. They began a Zion experience—living and working together in Jordan—which continues even now as they share life with each other. Those they served in Jordan were able to feel that spirit of unity as well.

As we contemplate the connection between these three groups of people and their stories, we find a common theme: that of moving beyond one's comfort zone to help those who are in need. In the First Presidency message in January, President Monson quoted the following story about Christ from Luke:

A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. [Luke 10:25–27]

In this chapter of Luke, Christ then recounted the parable of the good Samaritan and asked the lawyer:

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. [Luke 10:36–37]

“Times change, the years roll by, circumstances vary—but the Master’s counsel to the lawyer applies to you and to me just as surely as though we heard His voice speaking directly to us” (Thomas S. Monson, “The Way of the Master,” *Ensign*, January 2003, 3).

Each of the groups we have discussed was trying to follow the Savior’s admonition, as President Monson has counseled us.

Reinforcing this principle in the February 2003 *Ensign*, President Faust said:

Our objective is to have everyone feel the security, love, and warm embrace of the gospel. The divine Redeemer gave us the pattern for achieving this when He commanded: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37, 39). . . .

*As we plan to reach, involve, and serve the one, the principles to be kept before us on a panoramic screen in heroic size are the two great injunctions of the Savior to all of His children: love and serve God and love and serve our fellowmen. [James E. Faust, “Strengthening the Inner Self,” *Ensign*, February 2003, 3]*

Remember President Bateman’s discussion about the purpose of Brigham Young University: that students are being prepared to enter the world. And remember President Wilkinson’s charge to faculty: proper academic development and proper spiritual development for students. Many of us came from families where service to others was a regular part of our lives. BYU can reinforce those lessons already learned. Some of us, however, did not have that luxury. For us, BYU offers the opportunity to learn the lessons now: how to love and serve God and how to love and serve our fellowmen.

If we are to inherit eternal life, we must become a Zion society—of one heart and one mind. Here at Brigham Young University, as a community of scholars and students, we can practice these principles. Our role as faculty is to prepare you to be powerful, positive, contributing members to your profession—whatever that may be—and to help you experience the joy of living in a Zion society and providing service to others. Our professions will one day cease to exist as we now know them, but love and service will not. As we share in this microcosm of the Church and prepare to travel to the four corners of the earth, let us remember that the Lord said, “All things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal” (D&C 29:34).

I challenge all of us to “enter to learn; go forth to serve.” We may not serve in the manner that was exemplified in the three stories I told. Sometimes service is holding a child’s hand. Sometimes service is helping a roommate. Sometimes service is bringing chocolate chip cookies to my house, as my good friend Marty did last night. We have great opportunities because of the experiences that we share, and we can bring each other forward as we enter to learn and go forth to serve. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.