

# Resolutions

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**B**rothers and sisters, it is impressive to know that on an occasion like this with all the other places you could be and all the other things you could be doing with your time, you have chosen to be here in a Church-related setting. That tells me a lot about the kinds of good decisions you are making in your lives. You are going in the right direction, and if you continue choosing the right, you will arrive at a destination that will be good for you—now and in the hereafter.

For me, it is a humbling experience to be with you because there are among you some of the most impressive spiritual heroes we know. Barbara and I have learned to know about you and to know many of you because almost wherever we go, we meet people we had the privilege of seeing or knowing some place before.

That reminds me of the experience of a father saying to me, “Say, you were president of the MTC when our son was there. Did you know him?”

He told me his full name, and after thinking for a few moments, I said, “I’m sorry. I didn’t know him.”

And he said, “Oh, thank heavens!”

I would like to speak to you tonight very personally. What a blessing it would be to have the privilege of visiting with each of you one-on-one and get acquainted with you individually—to know of your background, your interests, aspirations, and concerns. Of all the young people I have met over the years, I have not met one who did not want to be happy and successful.

To a degree, we all know the gospel and what we should be doing in our lives. Very likely, we know more than we apply. Right?

It may be a little like the young county farm agent who wanted to put his college training to use and said to the farmer, “Sam, you know that now we use something called contour plowing.” And then he went on to expound on the benefits of hybrid strains of grain and crop rotation, and about the time he got to the benefits of milking the cows three times a day rather than two, the old farmer

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said, “Hey, sonny, just a minute. I’m not farming half as well as I know how already.”

Isn’t that the way life is? None of us is performing to the level of our knowledge. This is because it is hard to farm, or perform, as well as we know how. And that brings me to the subject for this evening.

I would like to visit with you about resolutions—resolutions to conform our lives more closely to what we already know about the gospel. I am sure that some of us have made a bundle of New Year’s resolutions, and maybe a few of us haven’t chosen to make any because of prior problems we have had in keeping them. Don’t overlook the power that making good resolutions can have to help make your life happier and more successful—regardless of your past behavior.

Let’s explore for a moment the term *resolution*. As a noun, it suggests steadfastness of purpose. As an adjective, *resolute* is characterized by firmness or determination. As a verb, *resolve* brings to mind such terms as courage, mettle, fortitude, tenacity, backbone, and moral stamina in the face of hardship, temptations, and unfavorable odds (see *American Heritage Dictionary* [Boston: Houghton-Mifflin]).

I was anxious to know something of your concerns and aspirations, and so I had an informal survey taken of 150 young adults who were asked to list three resolutions they felt would help them to become more successful and happy during the new year. Almost everyone in the survey (98 percent) included a resolution to increase the level of his or her spirituality. Two out of three (68 percent) indicated they would like to improve their social skills. Half (49 percent) indicated a desire to increase their level of physical fitness, and half (48 percent) wanted to grow intellectually. Everyone indicated a desire to improve. After all, self-improvement is at the heart of why we are here in mortality.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In the Joseph Smith Translation (Matthew 5:50), we read: “Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect.” The translation of the Greek word for *perfect* means “complete, finished, fully developed.” Some biblical analysts indicate that the suggestion to become perfect is exaggerated idealism or scriptural hyperbole. That is not the way we as Latter-day Saints interpret it. We believe that the Savior meant what he said and that, for us, becoming like our Father in Heaven and the Savior is a commandment—not just a suggestion. We should strive continually to become more like them.

You remember that following his resurrection the Savior rhetorically asked his disciples, “What manner of men ought ye to be?” He then answered his own question, “Even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

There is only one verse of scripture in the entire New Testament that tells us what the Savior did to develop himself during his mortal years from age twelve—when he had that experience in the temple—until he began his formal ministry at age thirty. The verse consists of just fourteen words. Count them: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

In other words, the Savior increased or developed in the same areas that those of you who were included in the poll indicated that you would like to improve, that is:

- intellectually (in both wisdom and knowledge)
- physically (in stature)
- socially (in favor with man)
- spiritually (in favor with God).

I am convinced that if we made and kept resolutions in these four areas, we would have a happier and more successful new year and every year for the rest of our lives.

First, consider this one:

*I resolve to expand my intellectual horizons. I will increase in wisdom.*

This year, commit yourself to read good books—not just when you are attending the university or college, but throughout your life. Some people learn to read but don't read. A few years ago, a disturbing poll indicated that 56 percent of college graduates, in that sample, never completely read a book all the way through following their schooling. At some point in our lives, we learned to read. But the question tonight is: Are we reading? Are we growing in wisdom?

We belong to a lay Church, as we believe the Church was in the Savior's time when humble fishermen and tax collectors were called to become his designated leaders. We do not have a professional, theologically trained and salaried clergy. Leaders and teachers are called from among the membership—people like you and me.

In terms of learning, however, the scriptural commandment to us is: "Seek ye out of the *best* books words of wisdom" and, "Become acquainted with all *good* books, and with languages, tongues, and people" (D&C 88:118, 90:15; emphasis added).

Notice the emphasis on *best* books and *good* books. What we choose to read will make a huge difference in the development of our minds and character.

We cannot justify mentally shifting into neutral and failing to exert our efforts to make progress intellectually. Way back in 1838, a member of the First Presidency addressed a group of relatively new members of the Church in which some apparently thought that all they had to do was to be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and then just sit back and wait to receive the celestial glory. He said:

*Vain are the hopes of those who embrace the gospel, and then suppose . . . they have nothing more to do. . . . The great God . . . never thought of . . .*

*raising up a society of ignoramuses, but of men and women of . . . intelligence as high as human nature was susceptible [sic]. [Sidney Rigdon, "To the Saints Abroad," *Elders' Journal* 1, no. 4 (August 1838): 53]*

So whether or not you are in school, the challenge is the same. We should continue learning throughout our entire lives—and, especially, learning more about the gospel. Now, with the enhanced Institute of Religion program, all of you can and should resolve to be enrolled in a religion class every term—whether or not you are a college student.

In the area of continued learning, my father-in-law was a real inspiration to me. He was the twelfth of thirteen children of a very poor convert immigrant family from Switzerland. After he had finished the first six years of elementary school, he, like many others in his time, was encouraged to drop out of school and learn a trade. Then one day he met Mr. Hicks, the new school teacher, who had come to Midway. He asked, "Albert, are you coming to school this year?" Albert explained that he was not planning to come back to school. Mr. Hicks said, "Well, why don't you come for three or four days and see how you like it?"

Albert came, and his future life was dramatically changed for the better. He said that this new teacher didn't just answer the questions that were raised in class, but he would write on the chalkboard the titles of the books where the students could find the answers. A thirst for learning developed in Albert that was never quenched. He was a hardworking farmer providing for a large family, but when I came to know him, I hardly remember his being in the house without having a book—usually a thick book—in his work-worn hands. He would circle words he didn't know and write their definitions in the margins. He was a real student of history and the doctrine of the Church. Although he never had the

opportunity to go beyond the eighth grade, he read much more than most college graduates. He not only learned to read, he read.

Suppose you were to read an entire book each week for the next seventy years. You would read 3,640 books. That sounds like a lot; however, reportedly, there are today in the Library of Congress more than twenty-seven million books. One futurist—Tofler—said that books are spewing from the presses of the world at the rate of a thousand titles per day. That means that in seventy years there will be at least an additional twenty-five million volumes.

If we read continually, we would not be able to read more than the smallest fraction of the books in print. We should not waste time reading anything but that which would be uplifting and instructive. There is a lot of frivolous, useless, and morally destructive material in print that falls far short of that with which we should spend even a minute of our time. Remember, the scripture said, “Seek ye out of the *best* books words of wisdom” (D&C 88:118; emphasis added).

English clergyman Edwin Paxton Hood said, “Be as careful of the books you read, as of the company you keep; for your habits and character will be as much influenced by the former as by the latter” (*The New Dictionary of Thoughts* [New York: Standard Book Co., 1960], p. 65).

Here is a practical suggestion: Ask a few respected people who you know are readers to share with you the titles of the five books besides the scriptures they feel have had the most positive influence in their lives. You will soon accumulate a good list of titles for starters.

In addition to making a resolution that we will read only the best in print, it would be very beneficial if now we resolved not to watch even one R- or X-rated (NC-17) movie, video, or television show from now on. That may sound extreme to some of you, but I assure

you that much of our future happiness and success depends on it.

There is safety in following the prophet. President Benson has said:

*Consider carefully the words of the prophet Alma to his errant [and promiscuous] son, Corianton, “Forsake your sins, and go no more after the lusts of your eyes.” (Alma 39:9)*

*“The lusts of your eyes.” In our day, what does that expression mean?*

*Movies, television programs, and video recordings that are both suggestive and lewd.*

*Magazines and books that are obscene and pornographic.*

*We counsel you, . . . not to pollute your minds with such degrading matter, for the mind through which this filth passes is never the same afterwards. Don’t see R-rated movies or vulgar videos or participate in any entertainment that is immoral, suggestive, or pornographic. [“To the ‘Youth of the Noble Birthright,’” *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 45]*

In our day, this is one of the most effective tools Satan has to pacify and lull us into carnal security, cheat our souls, and lead us carefully down to hell (see 2 Nephi 28:21).

Senator Robert Byrd has said:

*If we in this nation continue to sow the images of murder, violence, drug abuse, . . . perversion, [and] pornography . . . before the eyes of millions . . . , year after year and day after day, we should not be surprised if the foundations of our society rot away as if from leprosy. [Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), p. 194]*

Now for the second resolution. *I will be resolute in preserving and strengthening my physical health.*

It is impressive that more than 160 years ago the Lord revealed a health code that we call the Word of Wisdom, which can make all the difference in how we feel and perform.

With good health, we can be happier and more successful. Without it, we are curtailed in almost every other way.

*Resolve to get an adequately balanced diet.*

Getting healthy nutrition is another area where it is hard to perform up to the level of our knowledge. Some friends of ours were having that last final parental review that most missionaries get prior to entering the door of the MTC.

The mother said, “Now, Bronson, you have your toothbrush and your pajamas?” “Yes, Mom,” he answered patiently.

“You remember how to iron a shirt? Be sure to put a cloth between the iron and your suit pants when you press them.”

“Yes, Mom!” “But we’d better hurry. We’re going to be late.”

“Okay, Son. Before we leave, just repeat back to me the four basic food groups.”

“Sure, Mom,” he said. “The four basic food groups for a prospective missionary are: peanut butter, Hostess chocolate cupcakes and Twinkies, chocolate milk, and Ramen noodles.” (Story told by Petrea Kelly, prior to Bronson Kelly’s departure to the California Fresno Mission.)

If this young man had continued with that philosophy on food, he could have ended up like a good friend of mine. His wife has been encouraging him to take off some weight. She said, “Bill, there are fifty pounds of you that I am not sealed to.”

Well, Bronson did finish a good mission and must have learned some additional nutritional habits because, from all we know, he has been able to keep his health. In fact, I understand he is in the audience tonight.

Resolve to follow the do’s in the Word of Wisdom: Eat plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables, and grains. Discover that a meal does not have to feature meat every time in order to be enjoyable. In addition to improving your health, your budget will also be benefited. It really is a “win-win” situation.

Then, resolve to avoid *completely* the don’ts—tobacco, alcohol, and addictive stimulants, coffee, tea, and drugs in any form—and you will be blessed in a multitude of ways. If any of these negative practices have been, or are a part of your life, right now, tonight, resolve that in your future there will be absolutely *no* participation in tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs, *ever!* What an improved society we would live in if the whole world were to make that one resolution!

*Resolve to get adequate physical exercise.*

Choose some sport or other vigorous physical exercise that is consistent with your situation and physical condition and be regular in pursuing it. Get the blood circulating and give your major muscles a workout. An appropriate amount of time and effort spent in exercising will help you to be more effective in all other areas of your life.

I don’t know what your choice will be. Personally, I prefer racquetball or walking to jogging. I haven’t seen many joggers who look very happy while they are doing it. Of course, you need to make your own choice, but resolve to do something physical regularly.

*Resolve to get adequate rest.*

Really follow the counsel of the Lord where he said: “Cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124).

Some of you are not getting the rest that you need. Some are habituated to going to bed late and sleeping much longer than your system really needs, thus missing out on some of the personal inspiration you could be receiving.

Adequately rested, there is great value that can come to you as an early riser. Years ago, Barbara and I were asked to drive President and Sister Marion G. Romney from Provo to their home in Salt Lake City. Along the way, President Romney shared some of his personal experiences when he was first called to serve as

a General Authority way back in 1941. He had been serving as a stake president at the time and had gone to general conference, where he was called, without prior knowledge, to be a General Authority. He was shocked and very nervous. He felt that he needed some advice, and so he went to Elder Harold B. Lee, a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve and former associate as a stake president. He asked him for advice about how to be successful as a General Authority. Elder Lee told him:

*If you are to be successful as a General Authority, . . . I will give you one piece of advice: Go to bed early and get up early. If you do, your body and mind will become rested and then, in the quiet of those early morning hours, you will receive more flashes of inspiration and insight than at any other time of the day.*

President Romney said,

*From that day on, I put that counsel into practice, and I know it works. Whenever I have a serious problem, or some assignment of a creative nature with which I hope to receive the influence of the Spirit, I always receive more assistance in the early morning hours than at any other time of the day. Following that counsel has helped me a great deal through the years. [See Joe J. Christensen, *To Grow in Spirit* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983), pp. 27–28]*

You can have a similar experience in your own life. You can change, even if you consider yourself a “night person.” Set the habit in twenty-one days. When it comes right down to it, it is a matter of *strong* resolve and “mind over mattress.”

Now to the third major resolution: *I resolve to be a truer friend and to become more socially acceptable to people of high standards.*

Learn to be the kind of person with whom others of high standards enjoy associating. We all would like to have more friends. More than

fifty years ago, Dale Carnegie wrote *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. In it, he listed some time-honored principles for making friends. You should read and reread the entire book. His suggestions are equally valuable today. Among them are:

*Become genuinely interested in other people.*

*Smile.* [Remember, the Lord commanded us to “be of good cheer.”]

*Remember that a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.*

*Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.*

*Talk in terms of the other person’s interests.*

*Make the other person feel important—and do it sincerely.* [Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), p. 112]

Occasionally, look in a full-length mirror. Certainly we should not become obsessed with how we look, but we should work to improve our physical appearance. President Kimball said:

*How nice and easy would it be if we had a magic wand! But we haven’t. You might take a careful inventory of your habits, your speech, your appearance, your weight, . . . and your eccentricities. . . . Take each item and analyze it. What do you like in others? What personality traits please you in others? Are your dresses too short, too long, too revealing, too old fashioned? Does your weight drive off possible suitors? Do you laugh raucously? Are you too selfish? Are you interested only in your own interests? [TSWK, pp. 295–96]*

The Lord expects us to do the best we can with what he has given us. President McKay said, “Even a barn looks better when it’s painted.” After you have done what you can to improve your appearance, forget about yourself and think of others and their needs.

Rather than working so hard to find Mister or Miss Right, work harder to *become* Mister or Miss Right and you will more likely have the social life and marriage you desire. You will have good friends, and, in the end, I hope you can be fortunate enough to marry your best friend.

In the New Testament, Jesus said to his disciples:

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. [John 13:34–35]*

Our challenge is to resolve to love everyone in the *appropriate* way. You all know there are different kinds of love—the romantic, the brotherly, and the kind that enables us to love our enemies. The Savior *universally* commands us to love our neighbors and even our enemies. On the other hand, the expression of romantic love is *anything but* a universal commandment. The full expression of romantic, physical affection by you is designed for you and one other person *only, inside* the bonds of marriage. If you remember that, then you will avoid the temptation to make the romantic expressions of physical affection merely a game, and you will be sure to protect and preserve yourself from the immense problems that come from the immorality that is so prominent in today's culture. You have heard so many times that your body is a temple and not a visitors' center. No tours are permitted.

Finally, the fourth resolve mentioned by everyone in the poll: *I will grow spiritually— I will increase in favor with God.*

In order to grow spiritually, there are a few items that are essential. Let's start with the most difficult and universally applicable to us all. If we are to increase in "favor with God," *we must resolve to overcome as much as possible the sin of human pride.*

President Benson and others maintain that pride is the universal sin (see "Beware of Pride," *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 6). That means that everyone of us, to one degree or another, suffers from the problem. No one of us is completely free from its effects, but we must do all in our power to overcome its influence.

Pride creeps up on us, because as human beings we have a *remarkable* capacity to fall under its influence—even when we think we are in the safest of religious settings.

I remember reading about the Sunday School teacher who gave to her class that great scriptural lesson on the proud Pharisee who had thanked the Lord that he was not a sinner like the publican, who knew he was a sinner and prayed for forgiveness. Jesus said the publican went down to his home more justified than the Pharisee. The Sunday School teacher then suggested to her class that they should all thank God that they were not like that Pharisee!

Another story relates that a Carthusian monk, explaining to an inquirer about the distinctive feature of his monastic order, said: "When it comes to good works, we don't match the Benedictines; as to preaching, we are not in a class with the Dominicans; the Jesuits are away ahead of us in learning; but in the matter of humility, we're tops" (adapted from Robert J. McCracken, *What Is Sin? What Is Virtue?* [New York: Harper & Row, 1966], p. 14).

Even in Church callings there can be danger. We may fall into the trap of aspiring to some position or another. That would be almost like praying, "Father, I want to serve. Use me . . . in an *executive* position! Remember that even the greatest of all—our Savior, Redeemer, and the Creator of worlds without number—set the example of humble service by kneeling and washing his disciples' feet. Where we serve does not matter. *How* we serve matters a great deal.

Pride causes us to become overly concerned as we compare ourselves with others about

how intelligent we think we are, the brand of our jeans or other clothing, the “costly apparel” we wear, to what organizations we belong, on which side of town we live, how much money we have, what race or nationality we are, what kind of car we drive, to what church we belong, how much education we have been privileged to acquire, and on, and on, and on.

In the scriptures there are many indications that pride has risen to destroy individuals, nations, and, in some cases, even the Church itself. Remember in 3 Nephi where we read:

*And they began again to prosper and to wax great. . . .*

*And now there was nothing in all the land to hinder the people from prospering continually, except they should fall into transgression. . . .*

*And it came to pass that there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired.* [A real urban renewal program.]

*And there were many highways cast up, . . . which led from city to city, and from land to land. . . .* [Some sort of an interstate highway system, I suppose.]

*But it came to pass . . . there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceedingly great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions;*

*For there were many merchants in the land [you business majors], and also many lawyers, and many officers.* [Apparently, a real stratified society developed.]

*And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.*

*Some were lifted up in pride. . . .*

*And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up.* [3 Nephi 6:4–14; emphasis added]

Someone calculated that no less than thirty times throughout the Book of Mormon, the cycles of prosperity and peace were destroyed, principally by the effects of human pride.

Your opportunities, your relative prosperity, and our stratified society make overcoming inappropriate pride a genuine challenge. Your cup of advantages is very full, and as the English proverb states, “A full cup must be carried steadily.”

Some years ago, just after finishing graduate school, I was visiting with an acquaintance. He was much older—probably twice my years. Earlier in his career he had gone back east to a major university and received some graduate training from a few of the then—known scholars in his field.

In the course of our conversation, my friend was critical of the leaders of the Church and some of the policies that he felt should long since have been changed.

Then he said the words that still ring in my memory, “You see, Joe, I am an intellectual.”

In my experience, the genuine intellectual does not need to announce it. Since that time, he spent his life on the fringe, speaking, writing, and associating with those who felt they knew more than the designated leaders of the Church. These negative and critical attitudes affected his wife, some of their children, and on to the grandchildren. In my mind he seemed to become an incarnation of the type of individual who had not heeded the warning Nephi gave when he said:

*O that cunning plan of the evil one! 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 Nephi 9:28–29; emphasis added]

It seemed that he permitted himself to be trapped by the sin of pride. We all face the same challenge, and succumbing to it could also cause us to perish spiritually.

An insightful man, Robert J. McCracken, wrote:

*If we make a listing of our sins, [pride] is the one that heads the list, breeds all the rest, and does more to estrange us from our neighbors or from God than any evil we can commit. . . .*

*. . . In this aspect, it is not only the worst of the seven deadly sins; it is the parent sin, the one that leads to every other, the sin from which no one is free. . . .*

*. . . Pride of rank—the delight taken in status, recognition, honors, in being at the head of the table, the top of the line. . . . Pride of intellect—the arrogance that thinks it knows more than it does, forgets the finiteness of the human mind, talks in terms of morons, smiles at the cultural crudity of contemporaries, and needs to be told what Madame Foch said to one of her sons who was boasting about a school prize: “Cleverness which has to be mentioned does not exist.” Pride of power—the passion to achieve it, to wield more and more of it, to feel superior to others, to give orders with a strident voice and move men about like pawns on a chessboard.* [McCracken, *What Is Sin?* pp. 11–12; emphasis added]

*Resolve now that you will read from the scriptures daily.*

President Benson has repeatedly emphasized that we should include some reading every day from the Book of Mormon. It really is another testament that Jesus is the Christ. Within its pages some scholars have counted that there are 3,925 references to the Savior. It has been calculated that, on average, in every 1.7 verses in the Book of Mormon, one reads

something about Jesus. Even slow readers can read two pages in ten minutes or less. If we started each January first reading just two pages of the Book of Mormon each day, by the time we came to September, we would have finished another reading. Then we could start over and continue to, as Nephi said, “feast upon the words of Christ.” If you don’t think you can handle two pages per day, do as a friend of mine suggests: Try fifteen seconds at least. Read at least one verse. Every decision of your life could be more inspired if you were to do this consistently.

*Next, resolve really to pray and not just say prayers.*

There is a big difference. Learn to pour out the real in-depth feelings of your heart to your Heavenly Father, rather than merely going through the form of saying about exactly the same trite words and phrases that you have become accustomed to use. Remember that if we don’t feel like praying, as President Brigham Young counseled, that is the time to pray until we do feel like it.

I remember the experience of one bright missionary who came to the MTC to begin learning Spanish. He had one major problem. He could not trill an *r*. His tongue didn’t work that way. You can’t learn to pronounce Spanish well without trilling *r*’s. He worked, struggled, and prayed. A week before leaving the MTC, he had conquered his problem. He triumphantly wrote a letter to his parents. The entire first page was filled with nothing but *r*’s. He said that if he had not learned another thing in his entire mission than to humble himself and how really to pray, the whole experience would have been worth it.

Many of you brethren and some of you sisters have already been on full-time missions. For all of you single young men who haven’t, resolve now that you will prepare yourself physically, mentally, emotionally, and morally to serve as a full-time missionary. There is no other experience in which you will grow

spiritually more effectively and efficiently than you will while serving a full-time mission. If an elder follows the schedule, in two years he will receive more than 7,000 hours of specialized instruction in the scriptures; the basic principles of the gospel and how to teach them; and how to relate to members, nonmembers, and even companions. If we attended the three-hour block of meetings every Sunday, it would take us over forty-six years to accumulate 7,000 hours of instruction! You brethren have that *responsibility*, and some of you sisters will have that *opportunity*.

Next, if you are really serious about growing spiritually, then “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The scriptures tell us that “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exodus 20:8–10).

Permit me to share a personal experience that I think helped change my life for the better. Following my mission I was enrolled at BYU in my first semester home. The study requirements seemed to me to be stringent. I had an advanced course with a very demanding professor. The class met Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8:00 A.M. Every Monday morning there was always a detailed examination on the assigned material. The competition was keen, and I was highly motivated to do well.

On Sundays, after returning from my meetings, I started a practice of studying during the afternoon in preparation for what I knew would come on Monday morning. On one of those afternoons, another returned missionary roommate observed what I was doing. He said, “Say, Joe, are you a Mormon? Do you *really* believe in keeping the commandments?”

My answer was obvious: “Sure.”

“Then how about ‘Six days shalt thou labour, and do *all* thy work’?”

I got the message, and from that time on I changed. I began to do a better job of

organizing my study time during the six days of the week. And sometimes I found that I needed to get up early—and I mean *very* early—on some Monday mornings to finish an assignment or preparation. There was less procrastination in my life. And so it continued on through graduate school. I knew that I should get it done during the week. I couldn’t let myself get behind. I found that I felt better about myself and even noticed that my grades improved. I began to look forward to the change of pace that Sunday provided to take time to turn to things that were more spiritual.

I agree that there is some essential work that must be done on the Sabbath, and, *occasionally*, the ox does get in the mire. But usually, through our poor organization or procrastination, we may give the ox a little nudge.

Temptations to break the Sabbath are even greater now than they used to be. Television is a challenge. I love football, basketball, and about any athletic event. It doesn’t matter who is playing whom. Barbara said, “Joe, I don’t understand you. It doesn’t matter who is playing—Mars could be playing Jupiter and I’ll bet you would be interested.” I agreed that if Mars were playing Jupiter, I would *really* be interested.

As you know, some of the best games are televised on Sunday, and whether it is Super Bowl or not, the temptation is great. There are probably several within the sound of my voice who justify regularly spending hours on Sunday in front of the tube watching the plays, replays, and listening to the almost endless postgame commentary. Or, maybe for you it is justifying yourself watching other shows on Sunday that are anything but spiritually uplifting.

I have discovered that we can take advantage of technology. You who have them can simply use VCRs to record the program you don’t want to miss on Sunday, and then, in a fraction of the time on another day at your own convenience, you can watch that special event,

fast-forward through the commercials and time outs, and not miss a thing.

After you have attended your meetings and other Church duties, you don't have to sit and fold your hands on Sunday. It is not a day for grubbies, but there are many things you can do that can make the day special. Choose from among the following suggestions from this First Presidency message:

*As we plan our Sunday activities, . . . set aside time for . . . meditation, and for service to others. . . . Read the scriptures, conference reports, and Church publications; study the lives and teachings of the prophets; prepare church lessons and other church assignments [for example, study for your religion class]; write to or visit relatives and friends; write to missionaries; enjoy uplifting music . . . ; read with a child; do genealogical research, [work on your] personal histories; sing Church hymns; read uplifting literature; develop our appreciation for the cultural arts . . . ; friendship nonmembers . . . ; visit the sick, the aged, and the lonely. [Spencer W. Kimball, "Therefore I Was Taught," *Ensign*, January 1982, p. 3]*

Make Sundays special, and they will help make you special in the sight of the Lord. Who was it that said, "It is not so much that the Jews

kept the Sabbath," but rather, over the centuries, "The Sabbath kept the Jews." Keeping the Lord's day holy will do the same for you.

Well now, as one brother said, I have spoken *about* as long as it seems, and as the king advised in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, "Begin at the beginning . . . and go on till you come to the end: then stop" ("Turtle Soup," stanza 12). Well, we have come to that point.

It will take energy and effort to keep the resolutions about which I have spoken this evening. I pray that we will do this so that we can increase in "wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." And, in so doing, we will become more like the Savior every day for the rest of our lives. You have my sincere respect, confidence, trust, and love. I have never known more surely than now that Jesus is the Christ. He is our Exemplar. He lives, as does our Father in Heaven. We are commanded to become more like them, and if we make and keep good resolutions, we will become happier and more successful. For that I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.