

After the Manner of Jesus Christ

DONALD B. DOTY

I express my sincere gratitude and pleasure on receiving the degree of doctor of science and Christian service from Brigham Young University. I am not an alumnus of BYU. As I look back fifty-five years to when I visited the campus for the first time, I wish that I had received my undergraduate education at BYU. As I receive this distinguished degree, I join my wife and our two sons in having a degree from BYU.

I offer a few thoughts to the graduates as you embark on your life prepared by the degree from BYU that you will receive today.

Become a Scholar for Life

As I began my studies leading to the degree of doctor of medicine, the dean of the medical school met with the students. He said:

You are graduate students and are expected to learn on your own by your own effort. We will help you learn, but we will not spoon-feed you. We have a library of medicine. I would suggest that you go there, take a book from the shelves, read from it, and learn.

Today all of this information is available on the Internet, so it is easy to be studying and learning all of your life.

Resolve any conflict that you may have in your mind regarding scientifically based knowledge and knowledge that comes from the gifts of the Spirit. Remember the words of Isaiah:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? . . .

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. [Isaiah 28:9–10]

When one comes to the understanding that all knowledge has its origin with God and is given to man incrementally for the benefit of humankind, there is no conflict between science and gifts of the Spirit. We then qualify

Donald B. Doty, MD, thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon, received an honorary doctorate when this commencement address was given on 13 August 2015.

to receive new knowledge and recognize it rightfully as a gift from God.

Select Great Mentors and Follow Their Ways

On the first day of my training to become a heart surgeon with Dr. John W. Kirklin, one of the pioneers of the use of the heart-lung machine, he stated emphatically: “Try to do everything exactly as I do it!” At first I thought him to be arrogant, but as I considered more thoughtfully what he had said, I realized if I were ever to approach his excellence as a cardiac surgeon, it was incumbent upon me to follow his ways as accurately and precisely as possible.

President Russell M. Nelson, then Doctor Nelson, invited me to work with him in the practice of cardiovascular surgery. His environment was one in which honesty and doing what is right were the principles that guided all personal and professional relationships. Intellectual honesty means never leaving anything to chance. Intellectual dishonesty means thinking it will be okay when you know all is not right. Doing what is right means always taking the high road even if it is more difficult and less politically expedient.

Find Ways to Provide Christian Service

It has been easy for me as a medical doctor to provide service to others in time of need. It has been my responsibility to be available to the sick and afflicted. Illness does not have a calendar or a clock—there are no weekends, and illness frequently attacks late in the night. Medicine as a profession requires that we work when there is a need and stay with it until the problem is resolved.

I have learned that the times I taught and provided my skills as a surgeon without compensation to those living in deprived conditions were the most rewarding experiences of my professional life. Teaching and operating in hospitals in China, Russia, Latvia, and Ukraine not only provided care for people in need but also advanced quality of care provided

by the dedicated doctors working and doing their best with what little they had in those hospitals.

It may seem strange for me to speak of the end of a career that you have not even started. The reality is that your productive life working for compensation is limited and the time will pass too soon until you retire to the life of a pensioner. You may then choose a life of full-time play or full-time rest. I would suggest that it is better to prolong your career by continuing to use your talents in service to others.

When I left the rigor of the operating room, I was called to senior missionary service with my wife, Cheryl. We served full-time in the Missionary Department for nine years, organizing and supporting hundreds of volunteer health professionals responsible for the health and safety of more than 83,000 missionaries serving in missions worldwide. It was a second career for me, requiring study and learning in order to advise proper care for afflicted missionaries. I observed the deep concern of the Brethren of the Twelve and the Seventy whenever a missionary was seriously injured or ill. It was a blessing to observe divine intervention saving missionaries when we had done all that we could.

Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, provided the ultimate example of service to others. Throughout His ministry, as He went about teaching His gospel, He blessed and healed the sick and afflicted. Interestingly, many of the healing miracles of Jesus Christ were accomplished on the Sabbath. There were many times that I had to work on Sundays, holidays, or other inconvenient times, and I could have used my profession as an excuse not to serve in the Church and for other worthy causes. The blessings that accompany pure Christian service given whenever there is need, however, are so wonderful that any personal sacrifice should be made to receive them. As we serve others after the manner taught by Jesus Christ, we feel His love and focus our lives on becoming more like Him. In His name, Jesus Christ, amen.