

If You Want to Go Far, Go Together

JONATHAN O. HAFEN

What a great day! It is an inspiring sight to see all of you here today to celebrate both an end and a beginning! I want you to know that blue is my favorite color, so I know I am in the right place today.

I was also an August BYU grad, exactly thirty years ago. I am glad we can celebrate together today.

As we have just been so beautifully taught by President Worthen, you have all entered and learned, and now it is time to go forth and serve. I say this to all of you and to each of you. Your future is radiant with promise and with opportunity, and the world needs you.

I love BYU! BYU exists to provide an outstanding education in an atmosphere of faith. But I believe BYU also exists because of the opportunity that it provides to connect us with others.

I speak to you today on behalf of the BYU Alumni Association. Our motto is Connected for Good. I want to share with you what I think that means.

My dad and my mom met at BYU in a class called Your Religious Problems. They were married a short time later, which, I suppose, solved their religious problems.

They followed the example of their parents—all BYU graduates. Orval Hafen attended “the BYU” in the 1920s. He was part of BYU’s debate team.

He ran for student body president, and he lost! But it wasn’t all bad. He met Ruth Clark, who, he wrote, “rather shied away from my attentions, but artful little rascal that she was, gave me just enough encouragement to keep me in misery” (Orval Hafen, *Journal*, vol. 1, 4; in possession of the author). So even though he lost the election at BYU, he won Ruth Clark’s heart, and they were married.

My mom’s mom, Trudy Kartchner, grew up poor in Colonia Juárez, Mexico. With the encouragement of her high school religion teacher, she wrote a letter to BYU president Franklin S. Harris, who responded with a scholarship offer for tuition and a job to earn money for rent and food. She went to class for six months and then she worked for six months until finally she graduated. In her own words, “Being on the BYU campus was a time I enjoyed more than any other in my life. . . . I wouldn’t have missed that for anything” (“The Life Stories of Gertrude Skousen and Ray William Kartchner,” 43; in possession of the author). I hope each of you graduates have similar feelings about your time here.

Jonathan O. Hafen, president of the BYU Alumni Association, delivered this commencement address on August 16, 2018.

Trudy met her husband, Ray, at BYU. Ray attended BYU during the Depression. He worked his way through school by washing test tubes in the biology lab for twenty-five cents an hour. He got a degree in biology and was a member of BYU's tennis team.

In the summer of 1987, I met my wife, Joy, here on what was supposed to be a group night hike to the Y that ended up being just the two of us. That was okay with me, and it solved one of my most pressing religious problems. She was, without a doubt, my very best BYU connection.

But when we talk about our BYU connections, we aren't only talking about relatives. I first connected with President Kevin J Worthen when he was my state and local government professor at the BYU Law School almost thirty years ago. And yes, he was presidential even back then.

One of my favorite BYU connections is with John S. Tanner, a BYU English professor in my day who is now the president of BYU–Hawaii. Professor Tanner taught inspiring classes about Shakespeare and Milton. His love of literature was infectious, and I caught it. I am so glad I did.

A big part of my BYU experience was teaching with some of my fellow BYU classmates at the MTC. I team taught with Krista Rogers—now Krista Rogers Mortensen. I learned from her that teaching German goes a lot better when you have a highly active sense of humor. More important, she was a great example of making the Spirit part of learning.

I also love making new BYU connections with students. Through the BYU Student Alumni's BYU Connect, I recently met a wonderful BYU student who is an English major. She hopes to be the first college graduate in her family and someday attend law school. She dreams of becoming a judge in her home state of Minnesota. If she were a stock, I would invest in her dream. She will be a great credit to BYU and to the Church.

Now let us talk about your BYU connections. If you solved one of your religious problems while you were here, congratulations! That is truly an eternal BYU connection. And think now about your favorite BYU professors. Think about friends

you have made while you were here. If you stay connected with that group, you will be richly rewarded throughout your life. As part of our Heavenly Father's plan, we are happier when we have strong personal connections like those.

An African proverb says it another way: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

An extraordinary thought is that some of your most important BYU connections may still lie ahead of you.

It is my pleasure today to confer upon each of you a lifetime membership in the BYU Alumni Association. We offer our congratulations and welcome you into this great association of more than 423,000 people. That is a lot of potential BYU connections!

You are now and will always be “connected for good” with some of the most wonderful people in the world. There are nearly one hundred BYU alumni chapters throughout the United States in which you can become involved in fun and meaningful BYU-related activities. And we have twenty-one new professional alumni chapters right here along the Wasatch Front. Professional chapters are sponsored by various colleges and departments on campus and offer each of you the opportunity to gather with others from your college as well as to mentor and support current BYU students.

For your BYU connections who will remain here on campus, it is a bittersweet day today for sure. It is hard to see you go, but wonderful things await you! You did not come to BYU to stay here. You came to BYU to prepare yourself for what lies ahead and then to go out and pursue your dreams. I can think of no better preparation to pursue those dreams than attending BYU.

My dear graduates, thank you for becoming part of my BYU connections today. May your positive memories of BYU stay with you throughout your life. May your BYU connections continue to be a strong influence in all that you do. May you know that you will always be welcome here on campus on this consecrated ground. And may God bless each of you and this wonderful university. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.