

# *Trust in the Lord*

GENE R. COOK

**B**rothers and sisters, it really is a great privilege to be here at Brigham Young University, a great school. School brings back some good memories. It also brings back some other memories: books, labs, exams, teachers, professors, and long study hours.

It reminds me of the story of the young man who was determined to improve his grades in zoology. He had studied all night long for the final zoology exam. When he arrived at the class the next morning he saw, to his surprise, ten birds sitting on ten perches with hoods covering their whole bodies except for their legs. Then, to his amazement, the teacher said, "The exam will not consist of all those things you studied, but of your walking up to these birds, looking at their legs, and identifying their genus and species."

As this young student thought about it, he became angrier and angrier. He walked up to the birds and looked at their legs. They all looked the same to him. The more he thought about the fact that he had spent hours and hours studying, the angrier he became.

He finally walked over to the teacher's desk, slammed down his test and said, "This is the most ridiculous exam I have ever heard of. I will not take it," and stomped toward the door. Just before he reached the door, because

the class was quite large, the professor called out, "What is your name?" The young man thought a moment, turned around, pulled up both pant legs, and said, "You guess, buddy, you guess!"

Well, brothers and sisters, I really am pleased to be here at BYU. There's no other school on all the earth quite like this one. You're a magnificent generation of young people. The Lord is raising you up to fulfill his purposes. To try to thwart those purposes, Satan has increased his ambassadors a hundredfold to counteract the good that is being done and will be done by your generation.

## **The "Big Ones"**

As you young men and women are at the threshold of some of life's key decisions, I have in mind this morning to provide you with some suggestions about facing those great decisions. I might say that those decisions are the "big ones"—the ones that really count. Decisions like discovering yourself and your

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*Gene R. Cook was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 29 May 1984.*

potential, going on a mission, decisions concerning school and your career, your future employment, finding a mate and marrying in the temple.

In order to make these suggestions to you, I would like to relate four true experiences that bear directly on these key decisions you are in the process of making or will soon have to make. Listen carefully. Silently pray to be taught. There may be something the Lord will say to you in your heart as a result of what is spoken here this morning.

How do you discover yourself? What is your potential? The mind of man is limitless. You are a son or daughter of God. We were all made in the image of our Father.

### **Discover Your True Potential**

Some years ago a young man I'll call Raymond was in the seventh grade. He was a little taller than the other boys and was doing quite well in basketball and track. However, as the year progressed, the coach of the team began saying to him, "Raymond, stay seated. You're no ball player. You're too clumsy!" The next game, "No, we don't need you. You stay right there. You can't run. You can't shoot the ball. You're not fast enough." This process continued for a number of months.

So the inevitable happened, because of that continual negative conditioning, and Raymond finally believed what he was being told about himself. He bought it hook, line, and sinker. He believed it so much that in coming years he did his best to avoid gym altogether. He did not play basketball with the other young men anymore at Church or at school. He set aside running. He avoided sports and went through high school minimizing interaction of any kind in sports. The negative conditioning even followed him into his first year of college. Some athletics were required, but again he minimized his involvement to the smallest degree possible.

A year later he found himself on a mission in a distant land. In this particular country the buses that the missionaries used did not stop to let the people get on or off. One had to learn to do that on the run.

One afternoon, as Raymond and his companion looked down the street, being a block or two from the bus stop, they saw the bus coming. One of them said, "Run, Elder, run, or we'll miss our next appointment." To Raymond's great surprise, he beat his companion to the bus stop. Again, that afternoon, Raymond purposely arranged a few runs for the bus. He beat his companion each time.

He was shocked, amazed, and almost unbelieving, because he knew that his companion had received a number of awards for being the fastest runner in all of northern Arizona. Raymond was overcome. Could it be so? They ran again. He won.

All of a sudden the terrible realization came that he had wasted all those years. He could have excelled in athletics but he had believed what someone else had sown in his mind. He then began questioning himself about every other attitude he had in which he might have been deceived concerning belief in self.

### **As a Man Thinketh, So Is He**

Have you ever done that? Are you in that process now? Has someone convinced you that you are not good at music or mathematics or that you'll always be overweight? Each of us definitely had different gifts given to us. But I'm convinced that many of us are severely limited by the beliefs we have about our own self.

Solomon said, "For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). And the Lord said, "And then, behold, according to your desires, yea, even according to your faith shall it be done unto you" (D&C 11:17). You cannot rise higher than your own beliefs and thoughts about yourself. Jesus said, "If thou

canst believe, *all things are possible to him that believeth*" (Mark 9:23); emphasis added).

One of the greatest processes you are in now is to discover yourself, to find those gifts and capacities God has given you. He has given you great talents, the smallest part of which you have just begun to utilize. Trust the Lord to assist you in unlocking the door to those gifts. Some of us have created imaginary limits in our own mind. There is literally a genius locked up inside each of us. Don't ever let anyone convince you of the contrary!

The young man in this true story found himself in the mission field. Didn't the Lord teach us that whosoever sought his own life would lose it, and he that lost his life in the service of others would find it? Discover yourself! If you have not yet gone, go on a mission. You will find yourself.

*And now this calling and commandment give I unto you concerning all men.*

*Take upon you mine ordination, even that of an elder, to preach faith and repentance and remission of sins, according to my word, and the reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. [D&C 36:4; 53:3]*

Yes, that discovery of self will be a great blessing to you in making those major decisions—whether it be going on a mission, selecting a career, finding a suitable marriage partner, or raising a family.

All of you, to some degree, are facing a situation in which you encounter some difficult challenges in school. This is the first time many of you have been away from home for any period of time. You may be facing difficult examinations and struggling to meet your expectations and those of your professors.

When some think of school, they think rather humorously of the fellow who said, "Tenth grade was the best grade I ever went to. I spent three of the best years of my life there." Or there's the fellow that said, "The closest

some of you at school have ever come to honor is, 'Yes, your Honor;' 'No, your Honor.'"

### **Be Not Ashamed of the Truth**

May I tell you about an experience another young man faced in school? He was eighteen years of age and I'll call him Raymond also. This young man found himself in a speech class at a university. He received a scholarship from high school and was anxious to maintain a good grade point average. This somewhat directed him to this supposedly easy class. It wasn't until the last day had passed for being able to transfer to some other class that the teacher said, "Student's, you will be pleased to know that in the last twenty-five years of my teaching I've only given five A's."

Raymond's heart sank. He tried transferring from the class but was unable to do so. Through the months he received B's, B-'s, and once in awhile, a B+, but never an A. He was disheartened. Thirty days from the conclusion of the term the teacher stood up and said to the class, "You each have one last talk to give. It will determine half of your grade. You must (1) select an extremely controversial subject, (2) talk for twenty-five minutes, (3) make an actual defense of the subject the best you can, (4) be prepared to receive a purposeful attack upon you and your subject after you have finished, (5) receive a written critique afterwards from each student in the class."

A great hush came over the class, mostly from self-doubt and fear. Some thought of talking on communism versus democracy, racial issues, birth control—anything that would be controversial.

Numbers were drawn to determine who would speak first. Raymond drew number nine. As the days went by and he saw the grueling experience each speaker went through, great fear mounted in his heart about what he should do.

He prayed about a topic, as I'm sure you all do concerning your school assignments. He

could not seem to settle on anything. He was now two days away from the day he was to give his speech and had nothing in writing. The impression seemed to be constantly the same, “If you’re looking for a controversial subject, choose the Book of Mormon. That’s controversial enough.”

Raymond was fearful, however, because he knew he was the only member of the Church in the class. He also knew that the teacher was an active member of a protestant church. She had clearly made it known, throughout the entire semester as she taught passages from the Bible, that the Bible was the only revelation from God to man.

Raymond struggled with himself. He feared that the whole idea might backfire on him. But he finally decided to do it anyway. As a priest he had served a stake mission the previous summer and knew the old missionary lesson depicting the Bible and Book of Mormon as scripture to the Old and New worlds.

The day of his presentation he announced his subject as the Book of Mormon. A hush fell over the class. He began teaching semi-historically and semi-academically, with the thought to not offend. However, about halfway through, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he thought, “I can’t just tell them historically about this book. I don’t care what they think of me, or what happens to my grade. These folks are going to get it. The Book of Mormon is true. They ought to all know it.”

He ended up teaching the lesson pretty much as it was written to be given to investigators, bearing his testimony frequently, and even concluding in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

He then waited for the attack. To his astonishment, not a word was spoken by the students. The teacher tried prompting and persuading them to attack. They would not. No one would. Not one word was spoken. Finally, in frustration, the teacher said, “Be seated, Raymond.”

The written student reviews were all positive. Four or five wrote, “You have almost convinced me of the truth of what you have spoken.” One individual who was particularly critical of the other students’ presentations wrote, “I really would like to know more about your church.”

What great faith it took for this young man to proceed and to teach what he knew was right in the face of almost sure ridicule. You might be interested to know that to his delight, Raymond received an A in that class. The Lord truly blesses any one of us that keeps the commandments and is not afraid to bear witness of him as he has commanded all of us “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in” (Mosiah 18:9).

#### **Seek Counsel from the Lord**

Didn’t Paul speak with the Spirit saying, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. [Proverbs 3:5–6]*

Remember my young friends, “To be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:29). Remember that counsel, in all your learning.

You may have faced, or you will face, the world just as this young man did. How much faith will you have? Remember to never be embarrassed, but to go forward and testify of that which you believe. These decisions, these big ones—marriage, mission, school, careers—will be more easily made if you pray with faith and truly trust in the Lord. Seek counsel from the Almighty.

Don’t act as a novice pretending to know it all. One novice, a tourist from the East camping in the mountains of the West, humorously said

to a seasoned guide (a mountain man), "Is it true that a grizzly bear won't attack you if you're carrying a lantern?" The man thought a moment and said, "Well, sonny, it depends on how fast you're carrying it!"

I think some of us, in making decisions, lay our plans out like a tourist in the forest, or like another tourist who followed the counsel for a surefire way to catch a porcupine: (1) get up in a tree with a large steel tub; (2) when the porcupine comes by, drop the tub over the porcupine; (3) this provides something to sit upon to plan the next move.

We can surely do better than that, brothers and sisters, in doing our planning in these critical decisions about life. May I give you another illustration that relates to the decisions of employment—one of the big ones.

### **Keep the Commandments**

Let me tell about another young man that I'll also call Raymond. Even though this incident happened in his teen years, it applies to any one of us, even as adults, in teaching us to rely on the Lord.

When he was eleven, Raymond obtained a paper route and really began to prosper. He was still delivering papers at age sixteen. One day, the manager of the newspaper, an inactive adult member of the Church, came in and said, "Raymond, you have been so loyal and done so well in selling subscriptions that I'm going to appoint you assistant manager of circulation of this newspaper. In your duties you'll supervise the other paper boys and teach them how to sell subscriptions. After school, after finishing your route, you'll be able to come to the office to work two or three hours. You'll be able to do some homework while you're waiting to answer complaints on the phone. All in all, it will be a great job for you. And by the way, your pay will be tripled."

The young man was delighted. He wanted to go on a mission and was saving money from his route to prepare for that day. This job

would simply accelerate the process. He counted his blessings for the ideal job at a time when many teenagers had no work.

He said to himself, over and over again, "My, the Lord blesses one who keeps the commandments." He wanted to glorify the Lord in that he had always paid his tithing, kept the Sabbath day holy, and honored his priesthood. He also felt he was being blessed for resisting the pressure to study on Sunday.

A successful year and a half went by and one Saturday, George, the newspaper manager, came to him and said, "You know, Raymond, one week from now we're going to begin delivering the Sunday paper. You will not only have your Sunday route to deliver early in the morning, but you'll have to stay in the office from about 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon. You'll also receive a thirty percent increase in pay."

Raymond's countenance immediately fell. The manager quickly added, "I know you're a Mormon, and you may, by chance, be thinking of not doing this extra job beyond your route. If you don't take the job, you'll not only lose the opportunity to earn more money on Sunday, but you'll also lose your paper route and be fired from your weekday job as well. There are many of my other paper boys who would give their right arm to have your job."

As Raymond went home on his bicycle that day, he was very despondent. He prayed over and over, "How could this be, Heavenly Father? I have kept the commandments. I've tried to do what is right. I'm trying to go on a mission. Now I may lose my job. Shall I work this added job on Sunday or not?"

He very emotionally explained the problem to his father, who gave him the correct answer when he said, "I don't know the answer, but I know someone who does," meaning the Lord. In a great teaching moment he put the burden back on Raymond.

Raymond struggled with the problem. He talked to his bishop. He told him about the

same thing his father had told him. He learned that there were sacrament meetings being held in the other wards in the afternoon that he could attend if he decided to work. He prayed and struggled with the problem two full days.

Tuesday, when asked for a decision by George, the manager, Raymond said with great emotion, "I love my job and my route, but I cannot work on Sunday, thereby missing all of my meetings and working throughout the Sabbath day. It's not right!"

George said emphatically and angrily, "You're fired! Come in Saturday to pick up your last check! Did you hear me? You're fired! There are scores of young men who would be glad to have a job like this. You're a very ungrateful young man!" And he stomped out of the office.

The next three or four days were hard for Raymond. The manager hardly spoke to him. He really wondered if he had decided correctly. He thought to himself, "There are many who have to work on Sunday because of their employment. Shouldn't I?" But the answer seemed to be the same: "There may be some who have to work on Sunday, but you don't have to and should not."

Saturday morning finally arrived and Raymond went in to pick up his last check. As he walked into the office somewhat downtrodden, George was waiting for him. He grabbed the boy by the arm and took him to a nearby room, perhaps for privacy, and said, "Raymond, please forgive me. I was wrong. I ought not to have tried to make you break the commandments of the Lord. I have found another young man of another faith who is willing to do the extra work on Sunday. You can keep your job. Will you?"

With a heart full of thankfulness, Raymond answered, "Yes." The manager then added, "You'll find the extra thirty percent I was going to pay you for the extra work on Sunday included in your paycheck this week, and also

in your future paychecks, as long as you continue working for me."

What great joy Raymond felt in his heart as he went home that afternoon, saying again and again to himself, "It is worth it to keep the commandments of the Lord. The Lord will always provide for his own." What joy Raymond felt a year later to see his manager in the congregation when he gave his final talk preparatory to leaving for his mission.

What greater joy, a few months ago, after twenty-six years, to find Raymond talking with George on the phone, learning that he's active, faithful, strong in the Church, and is a high priest group leader in his ward in another state.

### **The Lord Will Inspire You**

Yes, the Lord commanded us to "seek ye a living like unto men" (D&C 54:9). But also to be in the world but not be of it. Be careful that you never compromise the principles that you believe in. Remember this counsel: always trust in the Lord.

The Lord will inspire you in the selection of employment as long as it is an honest employment. You will be blessed by the sweat of your brow as you earn your keep. Remember, the Lord said:

*Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:  
But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord  
thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor  
thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy  
maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is  
within thy gates. [Exodus 20:9–10]*

The decisions concerning employment, missions, marriage, and careers truly are difficult ones, but if a man will look to the Lord, he truly will cause all things to "work together for your good" (D&C 90:24). Decisions will be correct and for your eternal welfare.

### **The Power of Faith**

Let me tell you of one last example of another young man. We'll also call him Raymond. I think the family of this young man exemplifies the love, confidence, and trust that must exist in family relationships.

Raymond found himself quite ill as he was serving his mission in a distant land. He had many digestive problems and the mission president was considering sending him home due to his poor health. To compound his problems, one day, while out walking, he found himself with a severe pain in his left foot. He couldn't even walk to the discussion he and his companion had planned. They went to the doctor who said, "It's just arthritis caused by the damp weather. If you'll stay off your foot for two or three days the pain will pass."

The young man did so. He also had a priesthood blessing, but nothing happened. He was a district leader at the time, and his district had just begun to baptize in a city where there had not been baptisms for some time. He could not understand how the Lord could allow him to remain down for those days when his district was just beginning to have success.

A week went by, two weeks, three weeks, a month in bed. He was still incapacitated with no change in the pain in his foot. Finally, he was taken to the mission home in the capital city where more suitable medical facilities were found.

An X-ray was taken. One of the bones in his foot had been fractured or broken and had then grown back together incorrectly. The doctors talked of either breaking the bone again or giving him some special electrical treatments that were supposed to fuse the bone correctly, but it would take another month. He was down again, going for treatments twice a day. The treatments didn't make any difference. This problem, on top of his other medical problems, had him somewhat discouraged, and again the consideration came to send him home.

One morning, after nearly three months, he stepped out of bed to find absolutely no pain in his foot. He stepped on the foot gently, then stamped on it, then ran with his companion for a mile that morning, totally healed. With great joy he returned immediately to the field to work.

Two more weeks went by. A letter arrived from home that said, "Dear son," and then followed a paragraph or two of chastisement for not having told his family about his ailments in the mission field. They indicated that they had learned of his problems from another missionary, a friend of his, who had written home. In great love they wrote, "We have begun a fast and constant prayer for you as a family. We also have placed your name on the temple prayer list and hope that it might be of help to you."

As he tearfully read the letter and examined his journal, he found that the day that he had risen from his bed healed was the very day the letter had been written, the very day his family began praying and exercising faith for their distant son.

How could that be, across 7,000 miles? I suppose no man knows, but the reality of the power of faith cannot be denied. Remember the counsel—trust in the Lord.

### **Your Faith Combined with Theirs**

My brothers and sisters, think of the great love your parents have for you and the sacrifices they have made for you which reach not just across 7,000 miles but across the eternities. Stay close to your families. Counsel with your parents and your brothers and sisters. Your faith combined with their faith will see you through any problem. They can help you tremendously with these major decisions, the big ones you face in life.

The Lord said, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). The ties that draw you close to your family ought to be continually strengthened. How ungrateful some of us are.

How little we know of the sacrifices of our parents for us.

How many of you know, for example, how many times your mother was up with you when you were a child with all the sleepless nights, how many times she wiped your tears, bandaged your knees, taught you of God, and cheered you up, even when she was discouraged and her heart was broken.

What do you know of your father who worked to sustain your family when he didn't feel like it, when he didn't want to, when he was discouraged and down—but he daily, monthly, yearly, went to work anyway. How much time and effort has it taken to raise you to the point you are at this time? How many thousands of hours, sleepless nights, fasting, and prayers have they invested in you for you to reach this point in your maturity (*see* 2 Nephi 4:5–7)?

How wise you would be to write them and express your love to them regularly. They hang on every word that comes from you of whom they are so proud. Allow them to be part of your life. Let them assist you in those key decisions. If those relationships are not now in order, find a way to put them in order.

### **The Measure of Man**

Many of you now look forward to another major decision, that of selecting a mate. Know that the Lord will also bless you in that major decision. After marriage, the children will come. They will teach the parents. I remember something that happened in my own family some months ago. While teaching illustrated Book of Mormon stories to my son, Jared, age 5, I made quite a point of the fact that Nephi had gone back into the city to get the brass plates. I rather innocently asked Jared, after finishing that instruction, “Why do you think that Nephi, then, had to go back to Jerusalem to get the plates?”

He thought a minute and said, “Well, I suppose, Dad, that when they were going into

the desert they didn't have anything else to eat on.”

Know that it is a commandment to marry and have a family. The Lord said, “It [is] not good that the man should be alone” (Moses 3:18). He also commanded that:

*Marriage is ordained of God unto man. . . . and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;*

*And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made. [D&C 49:15–17]*

I know some of you single sisters are worried about marriage and whether or not you'll ever be married. I heard one sister say with a smile, “The reason that fellow on the great white horse has not come for me is that he surely must have been killed in the war in heaven.”

Sisters, you know the promises of the Lord to you if you prove faithful, that the day will come, here or otherwise, when you will be married, that you will not lose any blessing that you would have otherwise had, had you been married. Be faithful, be patient.

I realize there are some of you who are already married and facing real struggles. That's good for your marriage if taken in the right spirit. Stay close to one another. Work out your difficulties. It will make your marriage even stronger. With a smile may I say that one young man was really good at laying down the law to his wife. The problem was that she was better at making amendments!

Another young couple was unwisely buying on credit and was in the process of having some real economic struggles. They couldn't decide where to put their new baby as they didn't have enough money to buy a baby crib. So they decided they'd have to put the new arrival in the box the color TV came in.



### Act in Faith and Trust in the Lord

Seriously, brothers and sisters, life is a struggle. Major decisions face all of you. But they are solvable and you will pass through them successfully if you rely on the Lord.

In summary, we see in all these examples the illustrations of young people like you who have acted in faith and have trusted in the Lord. The Lord really is the answer to it all. He is the one who will inspire you to go on a mission if you will seek him. He will inspire you in the selection of your career, your employment, your mate for time and all eternity. He's the one who will unleash your potential as an individual and teach you from the heavens who you are and what you ought to do.

In conclusion, may I make these few suggestions that will help you stay close to and trust in the Lord:

1. Pray to him, continually seeking revelation throughout the day (see 2 Nephi 9:52).

2. Read his scriptures daily, even if for only a few minutes. They will teach you of the world to come and give you direction in this world (see Helaman 3:27–30).

3. Exercise faith, keep the things of the Spirit as the first priority in your life, then all else will be appropriately added (see Jacob 2:18).

4. Seek to do his will—not your own—humbling yourself and repenting or changing your life as needed (see Helaman 10:45).

5. Love others, serve them, feed the Lord's flock (see John 21:15–17).

6. Keep the commandments with exactness (see Alma 57:21).

Remember, the Lord will truly prosper those who keep his commandments. He said:

*And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them. [1 Nephi 17:3]*

I bear testimony of the fact that if you keep the commandments, he nourishes you, strengthens you, and provides you means for accomplishing all things necessary to faithfully finish your divine mission here on earth. May the Lord bless you, this special generation, while you are making these great decisions, the big ones, yes, and also the little ones, throughout all your lives. Rely on the only sure power for doing it all correctly. Invite his spirit to be with you. He will see you through and return you to your celestial home. May we all look to the Lord (see 1 Nephi 15:3; 18:16), and trust in the Lord, as we ought to, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.