

Love Is Not Blind: Some Thoughts for College Students on Faith and Ambiguity

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Thank you, President Oaks. It feels good to be back on this campus. If you were to ask our children where they are from, they would still say Provo. I do not know how many more years that will continue; we hope that they will become acclimated to Rexburg soon. Provo and Rexburg have much in common, not the least of which is that in these two cities are two great colleges. It has been a source of great satisfaction to me to notice the support and concern that BYU people have for Ricks College. I want you BYU people to know that the people at Ricks appreciate your interest.

I also would like to share with you something I recently heard about students in the Church schools, so that we can be alert to what the enemy is saying. A friend of mine, a graduate from another school in this state, recently asked me if I knew the difference between a rooster, a patriot, and a coed who goes to an LDS college. I said that I did not know the difference, but that I had always wondered about that very question.

He said, "A rooster says 'cock-a-doodle-doo,' a patriot says 'Yankee Doodle-doo,' but a coed at Ricks or BYU says 'Any dude'll do.'" This obviously does not apply to us, except for the occasion on which I proposed to my wife here in Provo a number of years ago. At that

time, at least, I was glad that there was some truth in that observation.

The title for my remarks today, brothers and sisters, is a simple one that will leave you wondering what I mean; I hope it will be clear by the time I have finished. The title is "Love Is Not Blind."

When I was a law student, my wife and I attended a student ward in which most of the members were graduate students. We developed close friendships with many of those who were experiencing, as we were, the great expanding of our minds as we learned the tools of intellectual analysis and the expanding of our spirits as we drew close to the Lord through such experiences as marriage and the bearing of our first children.

One Sunday morning, the Elders Quorum in our ward held a special testimony meeting characterized by spiritual warmth and personal openness. During that meeting, a fellow law student related a boyhood experience that had occurred just after he had been ordained a deacon. He lived on a farm and had been promised that a calf about to be born would be his very

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own to raise. One summer morning when his parents were away, he was working in the barn when the expectant cow began to calve prematurely. He watched in great amazement as the little calf was born; and then, without warning, the mother suddenly rolled over the little calf. He could see that she was trying to kill it. In his heart he cried out to the Lord for help. Not thinking about how much more the cow weighed than he did, he pushed on her with all his strength and somehow moved her away. He picked up the lifeless body of the calf in his arms and, brokenhearted, the tears running down his cheeks, he looked at it, wondering what had happened and what he could do. Then he remembered, he told us, that he now held the Priesthood and had every right to pray for additional help. And so he prayed from the depths of his boyish, believing heart. Before long the little animal began breathing again, and he knew that his prayer had been heard.

After relating the story, the tears welled up in his eyes and he said to us, “Brethren, I tell you that story because I don’t know that I would do now what I did then. I think I might not expect the Lord’s help in that kind of situation. I am not sure that I would believe now, even if I relived that experience, that the calf’s survival was anything more than a coincidence. I don’t understand what has happened to me since that incident, but I sense that something has gone a little bit wrong.”

My friend in the Elders Quorum was not saying that he had lost faith in the Lord; rather, he was simply being very honest with us, I think, in sharing both the childlike and the sophisticated dimensions of his experience. This story reflects the thoughts and feelings that many of us experience, in our own way, during the college years. These thoughts and feelings are an important part of growing toward spiritual and intellectual maturity, as well as an important part of understanding both the strengths and the limitations of a college education.

Before entering college, most of us think of things for the most part in terms of black and white—there is very little gray in either the intellectual or the spiritual dimension of our perspective. Thus, most of the freshmen at places like BYU and Ricks have a wonderfully childlike optimism and loyalty that makes them more teachable and more pleasant than any other group of students. I consider it one of the great blessings of my life to be associated with so many young people at this point in their lives at Ricks College. It is typical of these young men and women to trust their teachers, to believe what they read, and to respond with boundless enthusiasm to invitations for Church service. Where else but in a student ward composed mostly of freshmen would you find a Church member so thrilled to be called by the bishop as the songbook coordinator, or perhaps the Relief Society Sunday morning orange juice specialist? As one returned missionary put it, one of the best things about a student ward composed mostly of freshmen and sophomores is that when a topic such as faith or repentance is raised for discussion nobody yawns.

As time goes on, however, new experiences may introduce a new dimension to a student’s perspective. In general, I would characterize this new dimension as a growing awareness that there is a kind of gap between the real and the ideal—between what is and what ought to be. To illustrate, I ask you to picture in your mind two circles, one inside the other. The inner boundary is the real, or what is; the outer boundary is the ideal, or what ought to be. We stand at the inner boundary, reaching out, trying to pull ourselves closer to the ideals to which we have committed ourselves. We become aware of the distance between these two boundaries when we sense that some things about ourselves or the circumstances we witness are not all we wish they were. At that point, some frustrations can arise. Let me offer some illustrations of what I mean.

Students at a large Church college may suffer disillusionment when they lose some great battle with the giant red-tape machine, or when they remain unknown and nameless to their student ward bishop for weeks or even months, or when they brush up against a faculty member whose Church commitments seem to them to be in doubt. At a more personal and spiritual level, perhaps an important prayer goes too long unanswered, or they suffer some devastating setback with grades, good health, or the prospects for marriage; and the heavens may seem closed in a time of great need. They may also become increasingly conscious of the imperfections of others, including parents, other Church members, or even a bishop or a stake president. As the historians say, when we become more familiar with those who have been our heroes we may begin to see their human limitations. Students may also begin to confront such controversial issues as the role of women in the Church and differing political views among Church members.

It is not uncommon for missionaries, too, to encounter this gap between the real and the ideal, perhaps because new missionaries generally make more idealistic commitments than they have ever before taken upon themselves. And yet, in spite of their most valiant efforts, they may find themselves more than once fighting back the tears of disappointment when the promised fruits of a positive mental attitude somehow elude them. There is a kind of poignancy in those moments when we first discover that there might be some limitations to the idea that we can do anything we make up our mind to do. I once gave everything I had to that proposition, in my determination to be the greatest shot-putter in the history of my junior high school. But I simply was not big enough—it really was hopeless.

Experiences such as these can produce confusion and uncertainty—in a word, ambiguity—and one may yearn with nostalgia for simpler, easier times when things seemed not only more

clear but more under our control. Such experiences may bring about the beginnings of skepticism, of criticism, of unwillingness to respond to authority or to invitations to reach for ideals that now truly seem beyond one's grasp. Not everybody will encounter what I have been describing, and I do not mean to suggest that everyone *must* encounter such experiences. But college students are probably more likely to encounter "ambiguity" than almost any other group.

The fundamental teachings of the restored gospel are potent, clear and unambiguous; but it is possible, on occasion, to encounter some ambiguity even in studying the scriptures. Consider for example the case—known to all of us—of Nephi, who slew Laban in order to obtain the scriptural record (see 1 Nephi 4:5–18). That situation is not free from ambiguity until the reader realizes that God himself, who gave the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13), was also the origin of the instructions to Nephi in that exceptional case.

Consider also the case of Peter on the night he denied any knowledge of his Master three times in succession (see Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 18). We commonly regard Peter as something of a coward whose commitment was not strong enough to make him rise to the Savior's defense, but I once heard President Spencer W. Kimball offer an alternative interpretation of Peter's situation. In a talk on this campus in 1971, President Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, said that the Savior's statement that Peter would deny him three times before the cock crowed might have been a request to Peter, not a prediction. Jesus just might have been instructing his chief apostle to deny any association with him in order to insure strong leadership for the Church after the Crucifixion. As President Kimball asked, who can doubt Peter's boldness and willingness to stand up and be counted when he struck off the ear of the guard in the garden of Gethsemane. President Kimball did not offer

this view as the only interpretation, but he did point out that there is enough justification for it that it ought to be considered. So what is the answer—was Peter a weakling, or was he so crucial to the survival of the Church that he was prohibited from risking his life? We are not sure. This is a scriptural incident in which there is some ambiguity inhibiting our total understanding.

Let us compare some other scriptural passages. The Lord has said that he cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance (D&C 1:31), yet elsewhere he said to the adulteress, “Where are . . . thine accusers? . . . Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:10, 11). There is indeed a principle of justice, but there is also a principle of mercy. At times these two correct principles collide with each other as the unifying higher principle of the Atonement does its work. Even though God has given us correct principles by which we are to govern ourselves, it is not always easy to apply them to particular situations in our lives.

We face concrete examples of that process every day as we attempt to fulfill our duties to family, Church, community, and professional concerns. A young mother who lives in this community and who has several children, a responsible Church position, and a busy and faithful husband, expressed her dismay as she tried to decide what should come first in her life and when. She was told, “Well, just be sure you put the Lord’s work first.”

Her reply: “But what if it is all the Lord’s work?”

Similarly, my wife and I have often wondered how we should deal with our children in one of the four thousand incidents not anticipated by any of the books on child-rearing. Sometimes one of us has a clear feeling about what should be done, but often I find myself simply telling her, with great conviction and total confidence in her, “Well, my dear, just be sure you do the right thing.”

Church and family life are not the only areas where the right answer is not always on the tip of the tongue. If you would stretch your mind about the implications of ambiguity, you might think once again of the Vietnam War. Should our nation have tried to do more than it did, or less than it did? Or perhaps you could consider whether we should sell all we have and donate our surplus to the millions of people who are starving. You might also ask yourself how much governmental intervention in business and private life is too much. The people on the extreme sides of these questions convey great certainty about what should be done. However, I think some of these people are more interested in being certain than they are in being right.

Turning to one more fertile field to illustrate the naturalness of ambiguity, I remember Arthur King’s statement that most truly great literary works will raise some profound question about a human problem, explore the question skillfully and in depth, and then leave the matter for the reader to resolve. He added that if the resolution seems too clear or too easy either the literature is not very good or those reading it have missed its point. Take, for example, Dostoevsky’s novel *The Idiot*, which seriously raises the question of whether it is possible for a true Christian to love unselfishly. The main character of the story is a pure and good person who loves two different women in two different ways. One he loves as most men love women—she cares for him, she helps him, he is attracted to her romantically, and she could make his life very happy. The other woman, a pathetically inadequate person, he loves primarily because she needs him desperately and because he has a compassionate heart. Posing the dilemma of which of these two women the man should marry, Dostoevsky seems to ask if it is possible for mortal men to be honestly devoted to the unselfish ideals of Christianity. As you might expect, he leaves the huge question unresolved, forcing the reader to ponder it for himself.

I have intentionally tried to suggest a wide variety of instances in which the answers we seek are not as quickly apparent as we might expect. My suggestion is that some uncertainty is characteristic of mortal experience. The mists of darkness in Lehi's dream are, for that very reason, a symbolic representation of life as we face it on this planet. Many things are, of course, very certain and very clear, as is so beautifully represented by the iron rod in Lehi's dream; but, particularly to those who pursue a college education, there is enough complexity to make the topic of ambiguity worthy of discussion.

Given, then, the existence for most of us of a gap between where we stand and where we would like to be, and given that we will have at least some experiences that make us wonder, what are we to do? I believe that there are three different levels of dealing with ambiguity. There may be more, but I would like to talk in terms of three.

At level one there are two typical attitudes, one of which is that we simply do not—perhaps cannot—see the problems that exist. Some seem almost consciously to filter out any perception of a gap between the real and the ideal. Those in this category are they for whom the gospel at its best is a firm handshake, an enthusiastic greeting, and a smiley button. Their mission was the best, their student ward is the best, and every new day is probably going to be the best day they ever had. These cheerful ones are happy, spontaneous, and optimistic, and they always manage to hang loose. They are able to weather many storms that would seem formidable to more pessimistic types, though one wonders if the reason is often that they have somehow missed hearing that a storm was going on.

A second group at level one has quite a different problem with the gap between what is and what ought to be. Those in this category eliminate the frustration created as they sense a distance between the real and the ideal in their world by, in effect, erasing the inner circle of

reality. They cling to the ideal so singlemindedly that they are able to avoid feeling the pain that would come from facing the truth about themselves, others, or the world around them. I suppose it is this category that is sometimes represented in the letters to the editor of the school papers at BYU and at Ricks where such shock is expressed that some person or some part of the institution has fallen short of perfection, leaving the writer aghast—"surely not at the Lord's university." One of the problems experienced by those in this group is that they seem unable to distinguish between imperfections that matter a great deal and those that may not matter so much. I think Hugh Nibley must have had them in mind when he spoke of those who think it is more commendable to get up at 5 A.M. to write a bad book than it is to get up at 9 A.M. to write a good book. It is obvious to Brother Nibley that the exact hour at which we arise is not as important as what we do once we are up.

I recall listening to a group of students as they discussed which of the two types of people I have just described offered the most appropriate model for their emulation. They felt that they had to choose between being relaxed and happy and carefree about the gospel, or being intense perfectionists. After listening to the discussion, I felt that both of these types suffer from the same limitation. It is not much of a choice to select between a frantic concern with perfection and a forced superficial happiness. Both perspectives lack depth, and their proponents understand things too quickly and draw conclusions from their experience too easily. Neither type is very well prepared for adversity, and I fear that the first strong wind that comes along will blow both of them over. This, I believe, is primarily because their roots have not sunk deep enough into the soil of experience to establish a firm foundation. Both also reflect the thinness of philosophy untempered by common sense. In both cases, it would be helpful simply to be more

realistic about life's experiences, even if that means facing some questions and limitations that leave one a bit uncomfortable. That very discomfort can be a motivation toward real growth. As someone has said, the true Church is intended not only to comfort the afflicted, but to afflict the comfortable.

I invite you, then, to step up to level two, where you see things for what they are; for only then can you deal with them in a meaningful and constructive way.

If we are not willing to grapple with the frustration that comes from honestly and bravely facing the uncertainties we encounter, we may never develop the kind of spiritual maturity that is necessary for our ultimate preparations. It was Heber C. Kimball who once said that the Church has many close places through which it must yet pass and that those living on borrowed light will not be able to stand when those days come. Thus, we need to develop the capacity to form judgments of our own about the value of ideas, opportunities, or people who may come into our lives. We will not always have the security of knowing whether a certain idea is "Church approved," because new ideas do not always come along with little tags attached to them saying whether the Church has given them the stamp of approval. Whether in the form of music, books, friends, or opportunities to serve, there is much that is "lovely, . . . of good report, [and] praiseworthy" (Article of Faith 13) that is not the subject of detailed discussion in Church manuals or courses of instruction. Those who will not risk exposure to experiences of life that are not obviously related to some well-known Church work or program will, I believe, live less abundant and meaningful lives than the Lord intends. We must develop sufficient independence of judgment and maturity of perspective that we are prepared to handle the shafts and whirlwinds of adversity and contradiction that are so likely to come along in our lives. When those times come,

we cannot be living on borrowed light. We should not be deceived by the clear-cut labels some may use to describe circumstances that are, in fact, not so clear. Our encounters with reality and disappointment are in fact vital stages in the development of our maturity and understanding.

Despite the value of this level-two kind of awareness about which I have been talking, some serious hazards still remain. One's acceptance of the clouds of uncertainty may be so complete that the iron rod fades into the receding mist and skepticism becomes a guiding philosophy. Often, this perspective comes from erasing the *outer* circle representing the ideal, or what ought to be, and focusing excessively on the inner circle of reality. When I was a teacher at the BYU Law School, I noticed how common it was among our first-year students to experience great frustration as they discovered how much our legal system is characterized not by hard and fast rules but by legal principles that often appear to contradict each other.

I remember, for example, one student in his first year who approached me after a class early in the semester to express the confusion he was encountering in his study of law. He said that he had what he called "a low tolerance for ambiguity" and had been wondering if part of his problem was that he had returned only weeks before from a mission, where everything was crisp and clear and where even the words he was to speak were provided for him. To feel successful, all he had to do was follow the step-by-step plan given him for each day and each task on his mission. Law school was making him feel totally at sea, as he groped for simple guidelines that would tell him what to do. His circumstance was only another example of what I have previously tried to describe as typical of college and university students early in their experience.

However, by the time our law students reached their third year of study, it was not

at all uncommon for them to develop such a high tolerance for ambiguity that they were skeptical about everything, including some dimensions of their religious faith. Where formerly they felt they had all the answers but just did not know what the questions were, they now seemed to have all the questions but few of the answers. I found myself wanting to tell our third-year law student that those who take too much delight in their finely honed tools of skepticism and dispassionate analysis will limit their effectiveness in the Church and elsewhere, because they become contentious, standoffish, arrogant, and unwilling to get involved and commit themselves.

I have seen some of these people try out their new intellectual tools in some context like a priesthood quorum or Sunday School class. A well-meaning teacher will make a point that they think is a little silly, and they will feel an irresistible urge to leap to their feet and pop the teacher's bubble. If they are successful, they begin looking for other opportunities to point out the exception to any rule anybody can state. They begin to delight in cross-examination of the unsuspecting, just looking for somebody's bubble up there floating around so that they can pop it with their shiny new pin. And in all that, they fail to realize that when some of those bubbles pop, out goes the air; and with it goes much of the feeling of trust, loyalty, harmony, and sincerity so essential to preserving the Spirit of the Lord.

If that begins to happen in your ward, in your home, or in your marriage, you might have begun to destroy the fragile fabric of trust that binds us together in all loving relationships. People in your ward may come away from some of their encounters with you wondering how you can possibly have a deep commitment to the Church and do some of the things you do.

I am not suggesting that we should always just smile and nod our approval, implying that everything is wonderful and that our highest

hope is that everybody have a nice day. That is level one. I am suggesting that you realize the potential for evil as well as good that may come with what a college education can do to your mind and your way of dealing with other people.

The dangers of which I speak are not limited to our relations with others. They can become very personal, prying into our own hearts in unhealthy ways. The ability to acknowledge ambiguity is not a final form of enlightenment. Having admitted to a willingness to suspend judgment temporarily on questions that seem hard to answer, having developed greater tolerance and more patience, our basic posture toward the Church can, if we are not careful, gradually shift from being committed to being noncommittal. That is not a healthy posture. Indeed, in many ways, a Church member who moves from a stage of commitment to a stage of being tentative and noncommittal is in a worse position than one who has never before experienced a basic commitment. The previously committed person who developed a high tolerance for ambiguity may too easily assume that he has already been through the "positive mental attitude" routine and "knows better" now, as he judges things. He may assume that being submissive, meek, obedient, and humble are matters with which he is already familiar, and that he has finally outgrown the need to work very hard at being that way again. Brothers and sisters, those are the assumptions of a hardened heart.

I once had an experience that taught me a great lesson about the way a highly developed tolerance for "being realistic" can inhibit the workings of the Spirit in our lives. When I had been on my mission in Germany about a year, I was assigned to work with a brand new missionary named Elder Keeler, who had just arrived fresh from converting—or so he thought—all the stewardesses on the plane from New York to Frankfurt. Within a few days of his arrival, I was called to a meeting

in another city and had to leave him to work in our city with another inexperienced missionary whose companion went with me. I returned late that night.

The next morning I asked him how his day had gone. He broke into a big smile and said that he had found a family who would surely join the Church. In our mission, it was rare to see anybody join the Church, let alone a whole family. I asked for more details, but he had forgotten to write down either the name or the address. All he could remember was that the family lived on the top floor of a big apartment house. "Oh, that's great," I thought to myself as I contemplated all those flights of stairs. He also explained that he knew so little German that he had exchanged but a few words with the woman who answered the door. But he did think she wanted us to come back—and he wanted to go find her and have me talk to her that very minute. I explained to him that the people who do not slam the door in missionaries' faces are not all planning to join the Church. But off we went to find her, mostly to humor him. He could not remember the right street either, so we picked a likely spot in our tracting area and began climbing up and down those endless polished staircases.

After a frustrating hour, I decided that I really needed to level with him. "Based on my many months of experience," I said, "it is simply not worth our time to try any longer to find that woman. I have developed a tolerance for the realities of missionary work, and I simply know more about all this than you do."

His eyes filled with tears and his lower lip began to tremble. (That elder was no dummy—he recently graduated from Boalt Law School at Berkeley.) I remember it so well—he said to me through those tear-filled eyes, "Elder Hafen, I came on my mission to find the honest in heart. The Spirit told me that that woman is going to join the Church, and you can't stop me from finding her."

I decided that I had to teach him a lesson. So I raced him up one staircase after another until he was ready to drop, and so was I. "Elder Keeler," I asked, "had enough?"

"No," he said. "We've got to find her."

I began to smolder. I decided to work him until he pled with me to stop—then maybe he would get the message.

Then, at the top of a long flight of stairs, we found the apartment. She came to the door. He thrashed my ribs with his elbow and whispered loudly, "That's her, elder. That's the one. Talk to her!"

Not long ago, brothers and sisters, up on Maple Lane a few blocks from here, that woman's husband sat in our living room. He was here for general conference because he is the bishop of the Mannheim Ward. His two boys are preparing for missions; his wife and daughters are pillars of the Church. That is a lesson I can never forget about the limitations of the skepticism and the tolerance for ambiguity that come with learning and experience. I hope that I will never be so aware of "reality" that I am unresponsive to the whisperings of heaven.

It seems to me that the most productive response to ambiguity, then, is at level three, where we not only view things with our eyes wide open but with our hearts wide open as well. When we do that, there will be many times when we are called upon to take some action when we think we need more evidence before knowing just what to do. Such occasions may range from following the counsel of the Brethren on birth control to accepting a home teaching assignment. Based on my experience, I believe that it is always better to give the Lord and his Church the benefit of any doubts we may have when some such case seems too close to call. I stress that the willingness to be believing and accepting in these cases is a very different matter from blind obedience. It is, rather, a loving and knowing kind of obedience.

The English writer G. K. Chesterton once addressed questions similar to those

I have raised today. He distinguished among “optimists,” “pessimists,” and “improvers,” as he called them, which roughly correspond to my three levels of dealing with ambiguity. He concluded that both the optimists and the pessimists looked too much at only one side of things, and observed that neither of them can be of much help in improving the human condition, because people cannot solve problems unless they are willing both to acknowledge that a problem exists and yet retain enough genuine loyalty to do something about it.

More specifically, Chesterton wrote that the evil of the excessive optimist (level one) is that he will

defend the indefensible. He is the jingo of the universe; he will say, “My cosmos, right or wrong.” He will be less inclined to the reform of things; more inclined to a sort of front-bench official answer to all attacks, soothing everyone with assurances. He will not wash the world, but whitewash the world.

On the other hand, the evil of the pessimist (level two), wrote Chesterton, is

not that he chastises gods and men, but that he does not love what he chastises . . . [In being the so-called ‘candid friend,’ the pessimist is not really candid.] He is keeping something back—in his own gloomy pleasure in saying unpleasant things. He has a secret desire to hurt, not merely to help. . . . He is using the ugly knowledge which was allowed him [in order] to strengthen the army, to discourage people from joining it.

In going on to describe the “improvers” (level three), Chesterton illustrates by referring to women, who tend to be so loyal to those who need them.

Some stupid people started the idea that because women obviously back up their own people through everything, therefore women are blind and do not see anything. They can hardly have known any

*women. The same women who are ready to defend their men through thick and thin . . . are almost morbidly lucid about the thinness of [their] excuses or the thickness of [their] head[s]. . . . Love is not blind; that is the last thing that it is. Love is bound; and the more it is bound the less it is blind. [G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1959), pp. 69–71.]*

Perhaps President Harold B. Lee was thinking of Chesterton’s point about women when he used to say, “Behind every great man, there is an amazed woman.”

Chesterton’s arranging of these categories makes me think of one other simple way to compare the differing levels of perspective that people bring to the way they cope with ambiguity. I think of the metaphorical image described in the hymn, “Lead Kindly Light.” At level one, people either do not or cannot see that there are both a “kindly light” and an “encircling gloom” or, if they perceive both, do not see any great difference between the two. At level two, on the other hand, the difference is acutely apparent, but one’s acceptance of the ambiguity between the light and the gloom may be so wholeheartedly pessimistic as to say, “Just remember that the hour is darkest just before everything goes completely black.”

How different are these responses from that calm but honest prayer of level three:

*Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom;
Lead thou me on! . . . I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.
[Hymns, no. 112]*

May I conclude with a simple little illustration of the response of one who stood at level three. He had passed from level one because his eyes were fully open to the reality, including some of the pain, of seeing things for what they were. Yet he had moved from a level two kind of realism to a third level where his mature perspective permitted what he saw

with those wide-open eyes to be subordinated to what he felt in a wide-open heart.

The man in this case is my own father, who died about fifteen years ago. At the time of this incident, he was in his mid-fifties and was very involved in his professional life and in other heavy obligations that frequently took him out of his hometown for several days at a time. He was tired. At a much earlier time in his life, he had served for ten years in a stake presidency and had fulfilled numerous other assignments for the Church. One day his friend Brother Whitehead approached him to say the stake presidency had called him. Brother Whitehead had told the presidency he would accept the assignment only if my father would act as his first counselor.

It is one thing to be called as a counselor in the bishopric when one is young and full of fresh enthusiasm to learn about leadership in the Church, and when one's time is not heavily committed. One might understandably have a somewhat different attitude at a later time in life. Let me share with you the inner thoughts of my father's heart as he wrote them that day in his personal journal:

My first reaction was, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me . . . I know something of the work required of a bishopric; it is a constant, continual grind; there is no let up . . . I am busy and my state affairs demand what spare time and energy I have. In some respects I am not humble and prayerful enough; I have not always been willing to submit unquestioningly to all the decisions of the Church . . . but neither do I feel that I can say no to any call that is made by the Church, and so now I add to my first reaction, 'nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' I will resolve to do it as best I can. There will be times when I will chafe under the

endless meetings, but I am going to get in tune with the program of the Church in every way. I do not intend to get sanctimonious, but I know there must be no reservations in my heart about my duties and responsibilities. The work of the Church will have to come first. It will not be hard for me to pay my tithing and attend regularly, as I have been doing that. But I will have to learn, I suppose, to love the Deseret News, or at least the Church Section, as much as I love the Tribune . . . I will have to get to the temple more often . . . I will have to become better acquainted with the ward members and be genuinely interested in them and their problems . . . I will have to learn to love every one of them and to dispose myself in such a way that they might find it possible to feel the same toward me. Perhaps in my weak way I will have to try and live as close to the Lord as we expect the General Authorities to do.

Perhaps my appreciation for understatement and my personal knowledge that my father was an honest man makes that statement seem to me a more striking example of dealing humbly with ambiguity than it really is. But his statement stirs me to want to be as childlike as my education has taught me to be tough-minded—wise as serpents and harmless as doves, I believe the Savior called it.

All I ask, then, brothers and sisters, is that we who go to college may be honest enough and courageous enough to face whatever uncertainties we may encounter, and that we try to understand them and do something about them. Perhaps then we will not be living on borrowed light. We love the Church; we love our faith. We may not understand everything in the universe, but that does not diminish our love. "Love is not blind; that is the last thing it is. Love is bound; and the more it is bound, the less it is blind." In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.