

Stand Up for Truth

GORDON B. HINCKLEY

It is an honor and a rare privilege to speak to this “stone-cold sober” gathering of university students.

You have done it again. You have made the national news. I was in Oregon on Sunday participating in a conference and read in the paper the Associated Press story of the *Princeton Review’s* “Advantage Guide to the Best 310 Colleges.”

Florida State University came out number one as the “party school” of the nation. George Washington University came out number two, and the University of Florida number three.

On the other side of the coin were the top 10 “stone-cold sober” schools.

Number one is Deep Springs College in Dyer, Nevada. I know nothing about that school. In fact, I had never before heard of Dyer, Nevada. I took occasion to look it up in my 1965 Rand McNally atlas. The map showed it to be very near the Nevada-California border, some distance from any large community. The population at the time my atlas was printed was 20 people. I am sure it has grown if it has a college.

I do not know the size of Deep Springs College, but I am confident that it in no way approaches the size of Brigham Young University, which was listed number two.

I said to myself, “What a significant honor this is. It says in effect that BYU is judged to be the number one large university in terms of sobriety and a no-nonsense attitude on the part of the student body on why they are going to a university—that is, to gain an education to prepare for constructive careers.”

I followed down the column and discovered that the U.S. Military Academy at West Point followed BYU, and that this was followed by the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. I submit to you that you are in good company, the best the nation has to offer.

The story indicated that a young female music major at Florida State University, upon hearing of her school’s ranking, asked, “Where did we come in, in academics? Number 350?” (See *The Register-Guard*, Eugene, Oregon, Sunday, 15 September 1996.)

I do not know how many of you were interviewed for this survey, but to you who responded, I offer my congratulations. You spoke for this whole vast student body, and you spoke in such a way as to make us proud

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of you. I hope that while others may gain the reputation for being stone-cold inebriated—if that’s what “partying” denotes—you will be recognized for being stone-cold sober and alert and on top of things.

This is truly a unique university. It is a great institution. We have every confidence in its leadership, in President Bateman, in his associates in the administration, and in the faculty. How fortunate you are to be here. I bring you the commendation of the board of trustees and the compliments of the entire Church. I only wish that everyone who wanted to come here might have the opportunity. That very many were turned away is a fact with which you are all familiar.

I repeat what I have said before, that a vast amount of the tithing funds of the Church is required to make it possible for you to receive an education at this remarkable institution. How great is your responsibility, how compelling your trust, to give your very best effort during the season that you are here.

We are all concerned about the time required for the average student to earn a bachelor’s degree. If you will shorten that time through careful planning and consistent studies, you will make it possible for more worthy young people to come here, thereby blessing their lives and the lives of others they will influence through the years.

I recently reread a statement given on this campus years ago by Charles H. Malik, then secretary general of the United Nations. He said:

I respect all men, and it is from disrespect for none that I say there are no great leaders in the world today. In fact, greatness itself is laughed to scorn. You should not be great today—you should sink yourself into the herd, you should not be distinguished from the crowd, you should simply be one of the many.

The commanding voice is lacking. The voice which speaks little, but which when it speaks, speaks

with compelling moral authority—this kind of voice is not congenial to this age. The age flattens and levels down every distinction into drab uniformity. Respect for the high, the noble, the great, the rare, the specimen that appears once every hundred or every thousand years, is gone. Respect at all is gone! If you ask whom and what people do respect, the answer is literally nobody and nothing. This is simply an unrespecting age—it is the age of utter mediocrity. To become a leader today, even a mediocre leader, is a most uphill struggle. You are constantly and in every way and from every side pulled down. One wonders who of those living today will be remembered a thousand years from now—the way we remember with such profound respect Plato, and Aristotle, and Christ, and Paul, and Augustine, and Aquinas.

If you believe in prayer, my friends, and I know you do, then pray that God send great leaders, especially great leaders of the spirit. [Charles H. Malik, “Forum Address” (18 November 1975), *BYU Studies* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 543–44]

It is in harmony with that profound statement that I wish to say a few words to you today. You are good. But it is not enough just to be good. You must be good for something. You must contribute good to the world. The world must be a better place for your presence. And the good that is in you must be spread to others.

I do not suppose that any of us here this day will be remembered a thousand years from now. I do not suppose that we will be remembered a century from now.

But in this world so filled with problems, so constantly threatened by dark and evil challenges, you can and must rise above mediocrity, above indifference. You can become involved and speak with a strong voice for that which is right.

I took these words from General Mark W. Clark, one of the notable officers of the World War II. He said:

All nations seek it constantly, because it is the key to greatness, sometimes to survival . . . the electric and the elusive quality known as leadership. Where does juvenile delinquency begin? In leaderless families. Where do slums fester? In leaderless cities. Which armies falter, which political parties fail? Poorly led ones. Contrary to the old saying that leaders are born not made, the art of leading can be taught and it can be mastered. [Quoted in Thomas Jefferson Research Center Bulletin, no. 23, December 1967]

You are here majoring in math, in chemistry or physics, in law, in English, whatever. This schooling is designed to equip you to earn a living in the society of which you will become a part. But you cannot simply sit in your laboratory or your library and let the world drift along its aimless way. It needs your strength, your courage, your voice in speaking up for those values that can save it.

If this university meets the purpose for which it is maintained, then you must leave here not alone with secular knowledge but, even more important, with a spiritual and moral foundation that will find expression to improve the family, the community, the nation, even the world of which you will be a part.

I read to you from 1 Kings 2:

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,

I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

That the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not

fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel. [1 Kings 2:1-4]

This “stone-cold sober” institution, this, your beloved alma mater, is the place to prepare yourselves, not only for your chosen academic discipline but in a much larger sense, and possibly a much more important sense, to be a man or a woman who will rise above the mediocrity of his or her surroundings and stand up for what is good and decent and right.

We are involved in the same battle that went on before the earth was created. It is a battle between right and wrong, between truth and error, between the design of the Almighty and his Beloved Son, on the one hand, and Lucifer, the son of the morning, on the other.

Stand up for truth in a world of sophistry. We are in the midst of a political campaign in this nation. As usual, we are being saturated with claims and counterclaims. Anyone who has lived as long as I have has heard again and again the sweet talk that leads to victory but that seems never to be realized thereafter. It is imperative that good people, men and women of principle, be involved in the political process; otherwise we abdicate power to those whose designs are almost entirely selfish.

John Engler, governor of Michigan, recently said:

*The wisdom of the ages reveals that our moral compass cannot ultimately come from Lansing or from any other state capital, any more than it can come from the nation's capital, or Hollywood, or the United Nations, or some abstract liberal conception of the “Village.” It comes from deep within us — it comes from our character, which is forged in our families and our faith and tempered in the arena of decisionmaking and action. [John Engler, “The Michigan Miracle,” *Imprimis* 25, no. 8 (August 1996): 4]*

I encourage you to speak up for moral standards in a world where filth, sleaze, pornography, and their evil brood are sweeping over us as a flood. In the first place, none of us can afford to be partakers of this rubbish. Not one of *us*, neither I nor any one of you, can become involved with such things as sleazy videotapes, suggestive television programs, debasing movies, sensual magazines, so-called “900 numbers,” or the kind of filth that evidently can be picked up on the Internet. Avoid them like the plague, for they are a serious and deadly disease.

Lend your strength to the crusade against illegal drugs. They are all about us—right here among us. Their use, particularly among youth, has doubled in the last four years. Think of it! Doubled since 1992. Where are we going? Lives are blighted, careers are destroyed, even the next generation is injured—in many cases beyond repair—when young people take up drugs and develop an addiction.

You can reach out to prevent a foolhardy decision on the part of a boy or girl. Your interest, your caring attitude, and your voice may make the difference between life and death in a very literal sense.

Stand up for integrity in your business, in your profession, in your home, in the society of which you are a part.

Again, it is not enough that you retreat to your private cloister and pursue only your special private interests. Your strong voice is needed. The weight of your stance may be enough to tip the scales in the direction of truth.

What a dismal picture is so often painted of men of greed, men who violated every canon of honesty to get a little more when they already had more than they knew how to use. There is the whole picture of the failed savings and loan organizations—whose destruction was caused by selfish men, bringing losses to thousands and increased burdens to every taxpayer in the nation. This is an indication of what happens when people will not stand up and speak out

against practices that are totally dishonest and that lead only to suffering and regret.

Stand up for integrity in the home. Many of you are not married, but most of you will be. Again, you cannot pursue your professional and other pursuits and neglect your domestic affairs. Never forget what President McKay taught: “No success in life can compensate for failure in the home” (see *CR*, April 1935, p. 116; quoting James Edward McCulloch, ed., *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [Washington, D.C.: Southern Co-operative League, 1924], p. 42). And President Harold B. Lee said: “Remember always that the most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1974], pp. 255–56).

I deal much with cases of divorce and requests for cancellation of temple sealings. It is the most difficult of all the things with which I have to do. Almost without exception, each case involves deception, dishonesty, broken promises, violated covenants, heartbreak, and tragedy. Begin with your own home to preserve the sanctity of your marriage, the eternity of your covenants, and the happiness that comes where there is love and security and trust in the family. Put the comfort and happiness of your companion and your children ahead of your own and reach out with a helping hand to those whose marriages have become troubled.

Stand up for loyalty—to your associates, to your heritage, to your good name, to the Church of which you are a part.

How marvelous a quality is loyalty. There is no substitute for it. It comes of an inner strength. Said Shakespeare: “To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man” (*Hamlet*, I, iii, 75).

In this world, almost without exception, we must work together as teams. It is so obvious to all of us that those on the football field or on

the basketball court must work together with loyalty one to another if they are to win. It is so in life. We work as teams, and there must be loyalty among us.

William Manchester, as a young Marine, fought through the terrible battle of Okinawa. He was savagely wounded but lived to return to the hellish fire of the Shuri Line, where thousands on each side perished. Then, years later, as a grown and mature man and an accomplished writer, he returned to Okinawa and walked over its once battle-scarred ridges. On reflection on those earlier brutish days, he wrote:

Men, I now knew, do not fight for flag or country, for the Marine Corps or glory or any other abstraction. They fight for one another. Any man in combat who lacks comrades who will die for him, or for whom he is willing to die, is not a man at all. He is truly damned. [Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), p. 391]

Be loyal to those with whom you work in the battles of life. "A house divided against itself cannot stand" (see Mark 3:25).

Stand up for loyalty to your heritage. Each of us represents the latest chapter in a long line of generations. Included in those generations are forebears, many of whom made terrible sacrifices for that which we have today. They have left us good names that have been safeguarded through the generations. The name that you carry is a treasured possession. Keep it unsullied. Pass it to the next generation without stain or embarrassment. Stand up for loyalty to those who have gone before you.

Be loyal to the Church. Stand tall for it. Defend it. Speak no evil against it. It is the work of God. He who ridicules it or defames it offends him whose church it is. It carries the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is as a wonderful mother to you, in whose arms you find shelter, warmth, comfort, and security.

Who's on the Lord's side? Who?

Now is the time to show.

We ask it fearlessly:

Who's on the Lord's side? Who?

[*"Who's on the Lord's Side?" Hymns, 1985, no. 260*]

You cannot be indifferent to this great cause. You have accepted it. You have entered into sacred covenants. Regardless of what you do in the future with the knowledge you gain from your secular studies, you cannot escape your obligation under the covenant you implicitly made when you were baptized and the covenant that you have renewed each time you have partaken of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

You cannot simply take for granted this cause, which is the cause of Christ. You cannot simply stand on the sidelines and watch the play between the forces of good and evil. Said Nephi: "They who are not for me are against me, saith our God" (2 Nephi 10:16). Wrote John the Revelator:

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

[Revelation 3:15–16]

And so, my beloved brethren and sisters, as you begin this new year in the pursuit of studies to qualify you for your life's work, I urge you with all the capacity that I have to reach out in a duty that stands beyond the requirements of our everyday lives; that is, to stand strong, even to become a leader in speaking up in behalf of those causes that make our civilization shine and that give comfort and peace to our lives. You can be a leader. You must be a

leader, as a member of this Church, in those causes for which this Church stands. Do not let fear overcome your efforts, for as Paul wrote to Timothy: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). The adversary of all truth would put into your heart a reluctance to make an effort. Cast that fear aside and be valiant in the cause of truth and righteousness and faith. If you *now* decide that this will become the pattern of your life, you will not have to make that decision again. You will put on “the armour of God” and raise your voice in defense of truth whatever the circumstances now and in all the years that lie ahead (see Ephesians 6:11).

God bless you, my beloved associates, you young men and women for whom the future holds such marvelous promise. May your world, and your children’s world, be the better for your presence and your leadership. Please know of our love for you, of our faith and confidence and trust in you. We thank you for your prayers on our behalf. Please know that we pray for you because you mean so very much to us and to the future of the world and to the wonderful Church we have the honor to represent. May the blessings of heaven attend you, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.