

# *An Eye Single*

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Every year now for six years I have worried and worked, studied and stewed, pondered and prayed—for a darn good way to get out of speaking to you. But Jeff has no sympathy for my anguish. He thinks he has such success making a silk purse out of a sow’s ear that he insists on using me as his visual aid.

This morning I would like to share with you a personal experience that comes from anguish over an earlier speaking assignment, an experience that revealed to me a principle I believe to be among the most important in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the one principle I prayed my son Matt would understand when he enrolled as a freshman at BYU last year. I believe it will be especially helpful to you if you ever feel inadequate or insecure or less confident than your neighbors. The principle is for me a key—perhaps the greatest key to truly confident living. To explain that, I need to share with you how *unconfidently* I began what is now a rather regular life of public speaking.

## **Total Disaster**

I am proud of my heritage—which happens to be that of a genuine farm girl from Enterprise, Utah. Now, if you haven’t heard of Enterprise, it’s a suburb of Beryl, Modena,

Panaca, and Pioche. Bryant Gumble would have as much fun with that as some of the city slickers from the big metropolis of St. George did. We weren’t a very confident bunch, and those smart-aleck kids (who included my own husband) had plenty to make fun of.

I grew up helping my five brothers milk the family cows. I drove a pickup truck while my father fed cattle, and I missed two weeks of school every October to gather potatoes into dusty gunnysacks and to ship them off to market.

Because of those humble beginnings I was always rather shy and absolutely terrified to speak before the public. While growing up I somehow managed to struggle through a few speaking assignments (and dodged all the rest) until I was married and living on this campus. During the first year here our stake president asked Jeff and me if we would speak in stake conference, and, as usual, Jeff accepted. I was mortified! When we returned home I cried, I stamped my feet, I threw a royal tantrum, but Jeff insisted. Finally I consented to do it if he would write my talk. He said, “Absolutely

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*Patricia T. Holland, wife of Jeffrey R. Holland, gave this devotional address at Brigham Young University on 10 September 1985.*

not!" I said, "Write the talk or get a new roommate." As you can see he wrote the talk. I gave it—and it was a total disaster. He received a lot of compliments for his, and I received gratuitous smiles for mine.

When we returned home I was more discouraged than ever. Through tears I asked, "What went wrong? The talk you wrote for me was better than the one you wrote for yourself, but from what I saw, your talk was the one that touched people's hearts. Mine hit them like a fast-acting sedative." But my wise and gentle tutor put his arms around me and said, "Pat, heart speaks to heart. If you want to touch someone's heart you have to speak from your own."

### **To Glorify Only God**

The next time I was asked to speak I trembled and I worried, but I sat at my desk and prayed that I could do my own work. I labored over that talk for hours, but with little success. In total frustration I opened my scriptures and read this in D&C 88:67: "If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things."

The words of that scripture sank deep into my soul, echoing as though they were spoken from the hilltops. It was the first time I ever remember reading that particular verse, but it has become—over these twenty years of time—one of the most important in my life. It is for me the key I mentioned to you earlier. You see, my eye had been single all right, but it was focused on the glories from men. I was terrified of public speaking primarily because I was too concerned about what other people would think of me. It was a matter of vanity and pride and ego. But in that scripture for a brief moment I could see that inhibitions and fears and self-consciousness could be conquered if I stopped performing for the admiration of

mortals and sought honestly and faithfully to glorify only God.

As the Spirit of the Lord spoke to my spirit through that scripture, I decided to give it a try. That talk didn't come instantly, as most blessings don't. I labored over every word, stopping frequently to remind the Lord and myself that I wanted this to really glorify him, to be his message as nearly as I could make it so.

I finished the talk and gave it. It wasn't the best talk ever given, and it wasn't the best talk I've ever given, but I felt fantastic about myself. I learned that day that appreciation for our own worth has nothing to do with the applause of one's neighbor and everything to do with having integrity before the Lord.

We all need a higher image of ourselves, but Satan would have us believe it comes totally from the praise of others when in fact it comes from our relationship with God.

A Church leader whom I highly regard told me recently that in his earlier days he was preoccupied with trying to please the people of this Church until in utter fatigue and confusion he decided instead to focus on pleasing God, letting God then worry about pleasing the people. This decision freed him to be who he really was and to find powers he didn't know he had. He said, "For the first time in my life I saw clearly my own divine potential."

It strikes me that as we start a new school year some of you may, from time to time, struggle right along with all those who have just arrived from the dusty farms of Enterprise, Utah. As I was getting out of my car yesterday, a freshman coed stopped to say hi. In our conversation she expressed her fears about her classes, roommates, dating, and academic success. The anxiety on her face has only quickened my desire to reach out to all of you with the promise of this principle today. When Jeff was called to serve you in this position, President Kimball was kind enough to give me a blessing as well. In that blessing he said, "Sister Holland, I charge you to reach out to

our young people on that campus as far as your time and energies will allow." I am trying to "reach out" the best way I know how. This morning begins my sixth year of cheering with you, singing the school song with you, worrying about you, praying over you, and loving you.

You are our family. But you also have heavenly parents far better than we, who know and believe in you perfectly. I promise you that if

this year your eye is fixed, centered, riveted, and so cemented that it cannot be distracted by the allure of the crowds or the vanities of this world—then you will hear your calling from God. Your destiny rests in that call. Keep your eye single to God's glory, and in doing so fill your bodies with such brightness of light that you will fulfill your destiny as one created in his image. Have a bright new year, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.