

# *Prepare Today for Tomorrow*

MARGARET D. NADAULD

**M**y beloved young brothers and sisters, you can imagine what a thrill it is for me to be here with you tonight! You are outstanding young people, some of the noble and great ones. Your lives reflect integrity and virtue and faith. You know who you are—sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. You know that he loves you.

You are blessed to be at the threshold of life at this time in the world's history. Imagine how Isaiah or John the Revelator would feel. This was the day they saw; the time of which they taught. We know the fullness of the gospel, we are led by a prophet, and there are abundant opportunities for both young women and young men. I hope you feel very blessed and loved by your Heavenly Father. He has sent you to earth at this crucial and exciting time because he needs your strength and your talents and your goodness.

A demanding world awaits you, and I am so proud of you for the preparation you are making toward your own unique contribution. These are preparing, precious years. What you learn and do in the period of time between 18 and 30 will in large part determine the direction of the remainder of your life. You have no time to waste! Very simply, you don't have time to major in popular TV sitcoms and minor

in the pursuit of recreation. What you spend your time doing is what you are going to become. You must find a way to mesh the goals you have for your life with what you are doing on a daily basis.

Tonight I have with me an old envelope. I know it's old because the postage is only six cents, and that means it was mailed a very long time ago. On the back of this envelope are directions to a destination.

It belonged to a young couple in their twenties and newly married. They were romantic and idealistic and optimistic about their future. He was in graduate school. She taught high school to support the two of them. One bright autumn day in New England they took a picnic lunch out to Walden Pond, near Boston. For those of you who love literature, you'll remember that Walden Pond and Henry David Thoreau go together. Like Thoreau they chose this location to think and ponder about their future. The question they had come to consider was this: What should they do with the rest of their lives?

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They wanted a road map for the future. They had a new marriage. It was a promising partnership. The future stretched out before them, and they wanted to make the very most of it. They talked of what to do and where to live. They talked about the children they wanted to have. They wanted to develop talents and share what they had been given. They wanted the world to be better because they had lived in it. They wanted to serve God always.

They were goal setters, so after a very philosophical afternoon and lots of discussion, they wrote down on the back of an envelope a list of goals and hopes and dreams that they intended would set the tone for the rest of their lives together. They drove away from that beautiful, serene setting with hope and optimism and the envelope.

The practical, routine, daily things of life took over. The envelope was soon forgotten. They got caught up in life. They prayed often and worked hard, and they served others. They started their family and finished graduate school. He worked at his career. She worked at being a young mother. They served—both in their Church and in the community. They had more children. Life got busier and busier. They didn't think about their Walden Pond envelope much at all. Things weren't so philosophical anymore, but they were happy. They were very happy. They just kept trying, with each choice they made, to see which path God wanted them to take.

Many years passed. They faced trials—some of them were very hard ones. There were a variety of challenges—some of them could have broken their spirits. They were middle-aged, and they plucked gray hairs and watched their waistlines expand. They moved to a new city, where the husband was hired for a very responsible job.

One day, in the process of the move, she found among some long-forgotten papers the Walden Pond envelope. It was old and yellowed. On the back was the list of goals made

by the young newlywed couple so many, many years before.

As she read down the list, tears came to her eyes. The years since they had spent that long-ago afternoon at Walden Pond flashed by. As her eyes focused on each item, she realized that most of the goals on the list had come to pass. Interestingly enough, her husband's new job was the fulfillment of the final notation they had made at Walden Pond. It was time now to get a new envelope and make a new list.

I would assume that many of you have your own envelope, so to speak. If, for some reason, you haven't gone through the process of thoughtfully preparing written goals, I strongly counsel you to do so now. You will go places and do things and have experiences that I cannot even imagine. But you must be working at something worthy of your best effort. You can't just expect the Lord to come along and pluck you off the couch and set you on a path of achievement. He doesn't work that way. He will direct effort, but he won't direct inertia!

I have to tell you that in your lives there will be surprises and experiences—both good and bad—that you can't even dream of. That's what makes life such an interesting adventure! Author George MacDonald gave a wonderful story example:

*Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace.*

[George MacDonald, cited in C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 160]

We don't want to willfully set goals for ourselves with no thought of what Heavenly Father might have for us to do. Pray for divine guidance so he can direct your efforts on a path that will bless you. Then remember that there really is a law of the harvest. It's unrealistic to suppose that lofty goals and ambitions can be met without hard work, discipline, and focused effort. So each day, each step along the way, ask for and then listen for divine guidance. Work hard at the goals you've set for yourself, and the Lord will bless you in your efforts. The combination of directed effort on your part and living close to the Spirit will get you to where you really should be.

Right now you are at such a wonderful place in life where you have mainly yourself to work on. Most of you don't have families for whom you are responsible. This is your time of personal development. This moment in your life will never happen again. Who you're sitting by, the place where you are—it will never be just like this again. Make the most of it so there will be no regrets: "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, / The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'" (John Greenleaf Whittier, *Maud Muller* [1856], st. 53.)

I would guess that some of you could be feeling overwhelmed with your circumstances, the academic demands of college life, the reality of having to work, and the social ups and downs you are all experiencing. I remember well my first few weeks of living away from home and at college. They were hard. I struggled a bit, and I guess I was naïve, too.

I had come from a small town that didn't even have one stoplight. Fortunately I didn't have a car, so I didn't have to worry about stoplights. At least that's one worry I didn't have! My mother had created a wonderful home, where accomplishment was a way of

life. She inspired me. My father provided spiritual and financial security and wise counsel.

Suddenly I was on my own. There were decisions to make, papers to write, exams to take, classes to prepare for, laundry to do, meals to fix, Church assignments, and an expanding social life. There were new roommates. It was difficult—some days nothing went well. After one such day I remember calling my mother and saying, "This is just too hard! If you think college is so great, why don't you come and take my place? I bet I could get my old job back at the Dairy Queen on Main Street."

She listened quietly. Mother was very wise but not very sympathetic. She simply said, "Well, dear, you'd better learn to handle it, because it gets harder!"

She was so right. Gradually I did learn to organize myself, and I learned a lot of other things, too. I changed my mind about wanting to give up college and go back to where everything was familiar and easy. I'm so thankful I stayed and did something that was hard for me. From those demanding experiences I began to mature.

Elder Glenn L. Pace told a wonderful story that illustrates my point:

*When I was in junior high school, I would get out of bed on cold winter mornings and head for the heat vent to get warm. The family cat would always beat me there, so I would gently shoo her away and sit down. Soon my mother would tell me it was time to leave for school. I would look out at the icicles on the house and dread going out into the cold, let alone beginning another day of school.*

*As I kissed my mother good-bye and went out the door, I would look longingly at my comfortable spot in front of the heat vent and find that the cat had repossessed it. How I envied that cat! If that weren't enough, she would look up at me with heavy eyelids and an expression that seemed to laugh at me and say, "Have fun in school, Glenn. I'm sure glad I'm not a human." I hated it when she did that.*

*However, an interesting thing would happen as the day went on. I would come home after experiencing the joys and sorrows of the school day and see that lazy cat still curled up in front of the vent, and I would smile and say to her, “I’m sure glad I’m not a cat.” [Glenn L. Pace, *Spiritual Plateaus* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1991), pp. 84–85]*

Leaving that heat vent took discipline on his behalf on cold mornings. Maturing and growing requires discipline and can be uncomfortable. But how unfortunate it would be to waste these growing moments. As you concentrate on developing a wide variety of skills, your life will be forever blessed.

Now is the time to develop some skills that will make an eternal difference to you. I would like to focus on four tonight. They aren’t necessarily learned in the classroom, but they are developed through practice and much effort.

### **Social Skills**

The first on my short list is social skills. If you can develop good social skills, the trip through life can be smoother.

The trend in the world is to demand our rights, to accuse others, and to excuse ourselves. The Savior taught us to care for others, to bless their lives, to understand their needs, and to be humble and meek, merciful and kind.

Remember when Jesus was mourning the death of his beloved cousin John the Baptist? He was sorrowing, he was sad, and he wanted to go away and be alone.

*He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.*

*And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.*

*And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, . . . send the multitude away, that they may go . . . and buy themselves victuals.*

*But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. [Matthew 14:13–16]*

Jesus forgot about his own concerns and fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fishes.

Jesus was the perfect exemplar of caring for others. He taught:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . .*

*And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. . . .*

*And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

*And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. [3 Nephi 12:3, 5, 7–9; see also Matthew 5:3–9]*

He taught us to be peacemakers.

You can’t beat those items for social skills, can you? And he promised us rewards for those behaviors: We will have mercy. We will inherit the earth. We will see God.

How do you treat others? Do you think of others first? Are you warm and interested in other people? Do you know someone who knows how to listen—really listen, with his or her heart? Does that person go beyond just being kind and pleasant and listen to real needs and try to help? Does that person focus attention on the other person rather than on him- or herself? It gives one a feeling of freedom to forget oneself and one’s own needs and inadequacies and care for another person. People who can do that are loved, and they are happy.

It has been my privilege to know people like that. Let me tell you about one. She was tall and a bit round. She was older. Her smile

exuded warmth. She had such a pleasant sense of humor. She was capable and she was kind. I don't know that she was born with those qualities, but I do know that they were well developed because she practiced them constantly. She nurtured her sense of humor by laughing at things that were funny and making light of things that didn't really matter. I can still remember her chuckle and lighthearted laugh. When she didn't marry or have children, she didn't mope away her life. She was productive in her career and in her community. She was elected to the city council. She held positions of respect in organizations she belonged to. At Christmastime she got a list of all the little children in her small town and sent Santa Claus letters to them. She didn't have her own children, so she found little girls who were needy and bought dolls for them and gave remote-control cars to the little boys. She was happy, and others were happy because of her.

Oh, my friends, how skills such as these social skills will bless you in your life—in public service, in careers, as parents, as spouses, as Church workers. Think of talking to a boss or going to a parent-teacher conference or speaking with the zoning commission or the ward council and having a desire to be warm, to understand, to be helpful rather than self-centered and combative and defensive and always so very right! Can you see how developing good social skills can bless lives, including your own?

You may recall a story told about President Spencer W. Kimball when he helped a young mother in an airport. This act of kindness is often told, but let me share with you the result of that kindness. It came in a letter President Kimball received more than 20 years later.

*Dear President Kimball: . . .*

*I was sitting in priesthood meeting last week, when a story was told of a loving service which you performed some twenty-one years ago in the Chicago airport. The story told of how you met a*

*young pregnant mother with a . . . screaming child, in . . . distress, waiting in a long line for her tickets. She was threatening miscarriage and therefore couldn't lift her child to comfort her. She had experienced four previous miscarriages, which gave added reason for the doctor's orders not to bend or lift.*

*You comforted the crying child and explained the dilemma to the other passengers in line. This act of love took the strain and tension off my mother. I was born a few months later in Flint, Michigan.*

*I just want to thank you for your love. Thank you for your example! [Gordon B. Hinckley, "Do Ye Even So to Them," *Ensign*, December 1991, p. 5]*

Good social skills begin with the Golden Rule: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12).

### **Practical Skills**

Second on my list is practical skills. The joy of living in a happy, productive home environment in the years to come is dependent on the creators of that home.

You young men out there, do you know what I see in you? I see more than bulging biceps or computer geniuses. I see men who want to be husbands, men who love little children and who want to communicate effectively with their wives and sons and daughters. I see men who are taking full advantage of available educational opportunities, who are preparing to be providers, and who take seriously that God-given responsibility.

I also see something else! I see men who should know how to care for a yard—mow, edge, fertilize, make it look like a million bucks! I see men who should know what to do with a tool chest, who should know the difference between pliers and a pipe wrench, and who should know how to use tools to make home repairs.

I know of one young man who spent the summer before starting graduate school



working as a handyman in his neighborhood. He repaired sprinklers, he remodeled closets, he landscaped front yards, he replaced old fences, and he painted decks.

He got married. And then the time came that the young couple was able to buy their first little home. It needed a lot of work—it was a real fixer-upper. Conveniently, he had developed the necessary skills. In one month he remodeled the basement into an apartment, which they rented out. This helped make their house payment. Besides being glad that her husband is smart and romantic, his new bride is impressed with the financial benefits of his practical skills.

This is the practical side of life. And it is important. You need to be more than an athlete! You need to be more than a superb test taker in school! Go apprentice with a plumber and learn how to fix a leaky faucet or follow your grandpa around his garden and learn the art of growing from him. Can your father or uncle or neighbor teach you basic carpentry skills or simple electrical techniques?

Now, young women, let's focus on you. For you this is a time of unprecedented opportunities and options. You have important choices to make, and I'm sure you're aware of that. Please, for yourself and for your future family, choose a fine education. I can see in you women who are educating themselves and who are preparing to bless others through that education.

Let me tell you about Alice. She is trained as a pediatrician. She is happily married and the mother of six children. She has served in many ways in the Church, including serving in a Relief Society presidency, and now she is the Cub Scout leader. She sews Halloween costumes and volunteers at the elementary school in the science lab.

Right now Alice is a full-time mother. Undoubtedly she will return to her medical practice when her children are raised, but that doesn't mean that she isn't using her medical

education. Teenagers from the neighborhood have been known to appear on her porch with all kinds of symptoms.

One dramatic event occurred when a vacationing mother telephoned Alice. Her daughter's baby-sitter had reported that the little girl was coughing and seemed sick. After apologizing for bothering her, the mother asked Alice for a favor. Could she please find time during the afternoon to check on her little girl, who appeared to have croup? For some reason, Alice immediately put aside what she was doing and went right down. She found the girl not breathing and in full cardiac arrest. She applied CPR. By the time the paramedics arrived, the little girl was breathing again. Alice's education and her skills saved the child's life.

Another young woman had great plans for her life. It's the story written by Ardeth G. Kapp about her sister Shirley. Shirley said:

*"I want to help the world turn, and I want to help it turn sharply. I want to make a mark in life."*

*With enough successes already to give her considerable confidence, her goals could be lofty. As she spoke of far-away places and exotic endeavors, her father posed a simple question with a not so simple answer. "Shirley," he said, "why don't you become great like your grandmother?"*

*. . . She excitedly asked, "What did she do?"*

*. . . He replied, "She kept a beautiful home and raised a fine family."*

*Often during the following years her father's counsel would come to mind for Shirley at the most unexpected times, such as during a psychology class at college, or when she was organizing the election campaign for a student body candidate. It would come during a piano recital or when she was camping or learning first aid. It would seem logical when she was preparing for a Spiritual Living lesson, but why right in the middle of an economics class dealing with the gross national product? Why in the middle of a heated discussion with a roommate about the budget and the laundry? And especially*

*why during general household responsibilities?*  
[In Ardeth Greene Kapp, *Miracles in Pinafores and Bluejeans* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977], pp. 2–4]

The time came when Shirley married and had 11 children. Her husband was serving as stake president in Canada when a General Authority came to stay in their home while he was on a conference assignment. Upon his return home from the assignment, he called Shirley's sister and reported on a grand experience. He said these words: "Your sister keeps a beautiful home and is raising a fine family." This was a direct quote from Shirley's father's advice to her as a girl. All the preparation she had made to make a mark on the world truly paid off. With her skills and talents, she has blessed a family, and the ripple effect of that will go on forever.

In you young women I see souls preparing to create a beautiful, loving environment for raising a family. I see women who can cook delicious, balanced, and healthy meals. I see women who find satisfaction from following recipes handed down by mothers and grandmothers. I see women who understand the importance of having a family put their feet under the dinner table every day. I see in you women who love children and look forward to the day when you will be mothers, nurturers of precious sons and daughters. I see women who will learn to make a budget and understand provident living, who look forward to establishing a home of love, a home of order, a home of faith.

Certainly husbands and wives can and will help each other. There may no longer be as strict a division of labor as there was in times gone by, but you will discover when you establish a home of your own that someone must accept responsibility for each task. Listen to these words from "The Family: A Proclamation to the World":

*By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.* [Ensign, November 1995, p. 102]

I take the words from this proclamation very seriously and very solemnly.

Young people, learn how to do practical things. Start now! It's fun to be a doer. Hard workers are admired! Accomplishment is attractive!

President Hinckley believes in the gospel of work. He said, "There is no substitute under the heavens for productive labor" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997], p. 705).

He also said:

*Children need to work with their parents—to wash dishes with them, to mop floors with them, to mow lawns, to prune trees and shrubbery, to paint and fix up and clean up and do a hundred other things where they will learn that labor is the price of cleanliness and progress and prosperity.* [Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, p. 707]

"Without hard work, nothing grows but weeds. There must be labor, incessant and constant, if there is to be a harvest" (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Farewell to a Prophet," *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 37).

That's from the prophet.

### **Refinement**

The third skill is refinement. Seek to add culture to your lives. I remember when I began dating Steve, who would become my husband. I was thrilled to know that he was student-body vice president of culture! Wow!

I romantically envisioned a constant round of evenings at the theater, concerts, art exhibits,

and ballets with this exciting man. I had better confess, though, that cultural vice president may well have been false advertising. After we really got acquainted, I learned that he prefers athletic events to concerts.

Perhaps I had a somewhat idealistic view of life. Still, there is something in us that is better and finer when exposed to the arts and cultural events. I'm grateful that my husband attends and enjoys these things with me and encourages them in our home. That well-roundedness is attractive to me.

It is a joy to me when one of our sons takes a date to a symphony performance after playing a muddy, mean rugby game. We introduced our seven young sons to the symphony by taking them to an outdoor performance of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, complete with live cannon fire at the end. That caught their attention!

Like many of your parents, we've spent thousands of dollars on music lessons and untold hours helping children practice the piano and violin at our house. A favorite memory is of a little boy sitting on the piano bench with his ball mitt next to him and his cleated feet swinging in time to the music he played. I remember one time one of the little boys said, "Oh, if I only had one hour left to live, I'd spend it practicing the piano because those practice hours last forever." Now he, too, realizes that beautiful music can add an enrichment to your home and to the lives of those who can play and create it.

What about art? If you can't paint artistically, you can learn to appreciate it. If you don't play or sing musically, you can develop a taste for the beauty of it. My favorite free-time pursuit is great literature. I love to curl up with a good book (and have been known to do so late at night and early into the morning hours).

President Hinckley said:

*I have in my home a reasonably good sound system. I do not use it frequently, but now and again,*

*I sit quietly in the semidarkness and listen for an hour or so to music that has endured through the centuries because of its remarkable qualities. I listened the other evening to Beethoven's Concerto for the Violin and marveled that such a thing could come out of the mind of a man. The composer, I suppose, was very much like the rest of us. I do not know how tall he was or how broad he was or how much he weighed. I assume that he got hungry, felt pain, and had most of the problems that we all have, and maybe some that we do not have. But out of the genius of that mind came a tremendous blending to create rare and magnificent masterpieces of music.* [General Authority Training Meeting, 29 September 1992, quoted in *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, p. 398]

### **Spiritual Skills**

Lastly, and encompassing all of the other skills, are the spiritual skills. One of our beloved hymns asks, "Ere you left your room this morning, / Did you think to pray?" ("Did You Think to Pray?" *Hymns*, 1985, no. 140). Then, I would ask, did you stop to listen? Have you left time in your busy, bustling schedule for quiet moments?

The whispering of the Spirit is a still small voice—one that isn't heard over loud, blaring music or harsh voices or frantic activity. It is a sweet, divine gift given to those who seek and patiently wait upon the Lord.

President David O. McKay told about the grief suffered in a family due to the loss of a precious, priceless son. His death had occurred as the result of a tragic accident, and the parents were inconsolable. The mother was particularly troubled and went about her round of duties relentlessly trying to block out her intense sorrow.

One day the mother was at home, quietly going about her work, and her thoughts turned toward the son they mourned so much. And then something very unusual happened. This son came to her briefly. He explained that he had tried to visit his father, but his father's life



was too busy, and he hadn't been able to get through to him. He wanted his parents to know that he was fine and that there was no need to worry about him (see *Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1953], pp. 525–26).

This spiritual experience was a great source of comfort to the mother, and to the father when she recounted it to him. But the father learned a great lesson. Sometimes we need to be still for a moment. We need to slow down and be less frenetic. Psalm 46:10 teaches us, "Be still, and know that I am God."

We need to have more reverence in our lives, more holiness, more times of quiet and peace and calm. We need a place where our souls can be nourished and tutored and blessed. Temples are such places. Homes can be such places. Dear young friends, you busy, happy, enthusiastic young friends, invite the Spirit to abide with you and then welcome its companionship with a listening, prepared, quiet heart.

The Sabbath day is a good day to calm down and put aside studies. It is a day to feed our souls. The story is told about a group of anthropologists traveling with some aborigines. On the third day of their trip, the aborigines just stopped moving. When the anthropologists asked why, the reply was, "We are stopping to wait for our souls to catch up." The Sabbath is a good time to wait for our souls to catch up.

I had an experience that I would like to share with you. I was trying to make a decision that was very important, and it concerned more than just myself. I'd had many years of practice in going to the Lord with decisions. I fasted. I attended temple sessions. I prayed a great deal. I tried to be spiritually in tune. Then I made the decision and took it to the Lord for confirmation. In spite of all my spiritual preparations, I still felt unsettled with the final decision. Then I read Doctrine and Covenants 9:7, which says, "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto

you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me."

It became very clear to me that to be completely settled about my decision, I needed more than spiritual preparation. I needed to do some practical preparation.

I got up from my knees and went to work. I met with people. I gathered data. I analyzed it. I thought about it. I counseled with Church leaders. I counseled with family. I considered it thoughtfully and very prayerfully. I wrote things down. Using a pencil and paper is always useful to me in analyzing information. It clarifies my thinking. So I wrote lists of pros and cons and considered these very prayerfully—crossing things off, narrowing things down.

I didn't hurry. I took time to let things settle in my mind. Then in due time I knew what I should do. Finally, the Lord blessed me with peace about the matter, just as promised in Doctrine and Covenants 6:23: "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" I learned that inspiration comes during this process. Can these same steps apply to you in major decisions you make? Surely it can.

Let me share another example: A young couple had a decision to make concerning a financial matter. Together they researched all the options. They investigated the matter inside out. The husband was well educated in financial and business matters and put his best thinking and analyzing to work. The final decision had to be made when the business opened on Tuesday. On Monday night, as the couple knelt together in prayer, they presented their decision to the Lord. They explained that they had used all their own data-gathering, analysis, and logic resources. They had done all they could think of, and this seemed to be the course to take. But they recognized that Heavenly Father knows all things, and so they pleaded that if there was some piece of information that would affect the decision,

would the Lord please bring it to their attention. They retired for the night, feeling fine about their decision and also about what they had asked of the Lord.

Early the next morning they were awakened by the phone ringing. The person on the other end gave them information regarding their decision that they would have had no way of knowing. This information clearly changed the decision that they would make. By opening of business that day, they knew what to do. It proved to be correct as the years passed and time confirmed their choice. The Lord did help them after they had done all they could do themselves.

This is not to say that if we pray hard and do what is right we are never going to have a bad outcome. We're on this earth to have experiences. Those experiences aren't always the ones we would choose for ourselves, but we're more likely to fulfill Heavenly Father's purposes and our goals if we develop the faith to know that after all we can do, he will bless our experience to our good. The Lord will help you after you have done all you can to make good decisions. He will bless you as you serve him and his children.

Do you love the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you understand what he did for you and what he will do for you?

Read the gospel of John from start to finish. Then read the other gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Then read 3 Nephi, starting with chapter 11. Learn of Christ. Thank God for his life and for his perfect love for you and for his perfect example. Then try to follow it. Try to live like he taught. Try to ask, "What would the Savior do?" And then do it. Try to always remember what he did for you. Remember his atoning sacrifice and never mock it by your actions, but glorify his name by your actions. We should all be reminded of how he blessed us when we partake of the sacrament each week. If we thoughtfully listen to the words of those prayers and live worthily to take his

name upon us, we will be blessed and we will bless others. If we love the Lord, we will reverence him and worship him, and our reverence will be observed in our actions and attitudes.

Let us always remember and reverence and worship him whose name this Church bears. A recent convert expressed this. He was out in the foyer with the stake missionary who had helped teach and baptize him. They were both tending their babies. They had something in common. But the convert had a concern, which he shared. He said, "You know, I joined this Church because it is the church of Jesus Christ and it bears his name. And yet since I was baptized, I haven't heard about him. When will they teach me about Jesus?"

As you prepare lessons and teach others, do not forget whose church this is, my dear young people. Christ must be at the forefront of all of our teaching, as well as the pattern for our daily life. Let us come to know Jesus. Let us take his name upon us and follow his example. It is simple. Living the gospel is really just that simple. Follow Christ.

As we study the scriptures, the standard works, we will come to know how best to follow Christ. Pushing a button on your computer and finding every quote on a certain subject is interesting, but it is not as powerful as reading the words of heaven in context from the books of scripture. There are many wonderful books written about the scriptures and explaining them—and they have their place. But the best way to get to know the Lord and his ways is to read his word. There is power and there is testimony in the word of God as he has given it in the Book of Mormon, the New Testament, and the other standard works. Find time to daily feast from those pages. Even if it is only 10 or 15 minutes, the strength you will gain will help you in your daily challenges.

As you go home tonight, as you kneel in your own private prayer, remember to give thanks for all you have been given, because you are so very blessed. Heavenly Father will

continue to give. He'll give you wisdom as you list goals on your very own envelope. He'll help you develop the skills that will enable you to reach your goals. He'll give you strength to keep practicing at them until they are part of you. Let him help you be all that you can be and help you do all that you can do.

I bear testimony of our Heavenly Father's great goodness and love, and I pray for him to help you meet your bright future well equipped and with confidence in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.