

“Serious About the Things to Be Done”

MAX L. PINEGAR

My dear brothers and sisters, I am thankful for this opportunity this morning. I am also humbled by this awesome responsibility of occupying your time. Considering who you are and how precious time is, I feel like the man who prayed, “Please, dear God, make my words today sweet and tender, for tomorrow I may have to eat them” (Richard L. Evans, comp., *Richard Evans’ Quote Book*, p. 194; hereinafter cited as *Quote Book*).

I have entitled my remarks today, “Serious About the Things to be Done,” and I certainly intend to be serious, but I might share something with you before we get too serious. I want you to know how great and magnanimous President Dallin Oaks is. Under any circumstances this great soul is willing to lend a helping hand. With the recent storms and the construction going on at the MTC, we had some damage to one of the buildings. President Oaks, as usual, responded to our plea for help and I later received this note from him—or at least it was attributed to him:

Dear Brother Pinegar:

When I got to the MTC, I found that the storm had knocked some bricks off the top of the building. So I rigged up a beam with a pulley at the top of the building and hoisted up a couple of barrels full of

bricks. When I had repaired the building, there were a lot of bricks left over. I hoisted the barrel back up again and secured the line at the bottom, and then went up and filled the barrel with the extra bricks. Then I went to the ground and cast off the line.

Unfortunately, the barrel of bricks was heavier than I was and before I realized what was happening the barrel started down, jerking me off the ground. I decided to hang on and halfway up I met the barrel coming down and received a severe blow on the shoulder. I then continued to the top, banging my head against the beam and getting my fingers jammed in the pulley. When the barrel hit the ground it shattered its bottom, allowing all the bricks to spill out.

I was now heavier than the barrel and so started down again at a high rate of speed. Halfway down, I met the barrel coming up and received severe injury to my shins. When I hit the ground I landed on the bricks, getting several painful cuts from the sharp edges.

Max L. Pinegar was president of the Missionary Training Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 11 April 1978.

At this point I must have lost my presence of mind, because I let go of the line. The barrel then came down, giving me another heavy blow on the head and putting me in the hospital. The next time you need this kind of help at the LTM, please call Ben Lewis and Fred Schwendiman, who are better qualified to handle such matters. [Adapted; author unknown]

Now, to more serious matters.

I would like to quote from an address entitled "The Perfect Executive," given by President Spencer W. Kimball to the Young Presidents Organization which had convened at Sun Valley, Idaho, on January 17, 1977. To quote:

Jesus was a patient, pleading, loving leader who didn't grow impatient with those he led.

And when Peter drew his sword and smote the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear, Jesus said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath." (John 18:11) Without anger or being perturbed, the incident passed.

You will recall his saying several times, "Come, follow me." His was a program of "Do what I do", rather than "Do what I say." His innate brilliance would have permitted him to put on a dazzling display, but that would have left his followers far behind. He walked and worked with those he was to serve. His was not a long-distance leadership. He was not afraid of close friends or that proximity to him would disappoint his followers. The leaven of true leadership cannot lift others until we are with and serve those to be led.

Jesus kept himself virtuous and thus, when his closeness to the people permitted them to touch the hem of his garment, virtue could flow from him. The woman in the large press of people touched his garment: "For she said, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. . . . And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:8, 30)

*We are not perfect as Jesus was, but unless those about us can see us striving and improving, they will not be able to look to us for example and they will see us as less than fully serious about the things to be done. [Spencer W. Kimball, "The Perfect Executive," *Insights and Perspectives* (a publication for employees of the Corporation of the President) 1 (May 1977): 4]*

Are we serious about the things to be done? What needs to be done? And how do we do it?

Sir Charles Morell said, "The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example" (*Quote Book*, p. 190). Can the world, in fact, look to us for example? Or will those about us see us as less than fully serious about our religious convictions? What needs to be done? And how do we do it?

Michelangelo chiseled away at a block of stone for months; eventually Moses resulted. When a man asked him how he had done it, he simply replied, "I just chiseled away until everything that wasn't Moses wasn't there."

What needs to be done? It is a wise man who follows the counsel of the living prophet. And what has he counseled? Some of the more urgent matters about which you and I should be fully serious were carefully outlined in the recent general conference. To mention only three:

What needs to be done? President Kimball: "Grow all the food that you possibly can on your own property. . . . Grow vegetables and eat those grown in your own yard. Even those residing in apartments or condominiums can generally grow a little food in pots and planters."

How do we do it? We simply chisel away at everything that stands in the way until that garden is there.

What needs to be done? President Kimball: "I urge all [members] to give serious attention to their histories. . . . Let no family go into eternity without having left their memories for . . . posterity."

How do we do it? We simply chisel away at everything that stands in the way until eventually the history results. Begin we must.

What needs to be done? President Kimball: “We want to emphasize again and place squarely upon the . . . individuals and their families the obligation to complete the four-generation program.”

How do we do it? We simply chisel away at everything that stands in the way until eventually the four-generation program is completed.

There is an urgency in these tasks, my brothers and sisters; careful planning with the establishment of goals is a must. We may have to sacrifice some of the things we now enjoy in order to accomplish what we have been asked to do by a prophet of the Lord. Perhaps less TV? Perhaps less sleep? I think of the reference in Proverbs 20:13, the first part of the verse, that says, “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty.” Love not sleep, lest the garden is not planted; love not sleep, lest the history is not written; love not sleep, lest the four-generation program is not completed.

In talking to missionaries at the Missionary Training Center on one occasion, Dr. Robert K. Thomas said, “If you’re almost worthy, you almost get the blessings.” If we almost plant our garden, then we almost get to eat the vegetables grown in our own yard. If we almost write our personal history, then we almost leave our memoirs for our posterity. If we almost complete the four-generation program, then we almost do as President Kimball has asked us to do.

Many of you will graduate this spring. Are you serious about the things to be done? Many of you will go home and work there or elsewhere this summer. Do you understand what needs to be done as you work for your employer? Are you serious about doing it? Many of you will remain at BYU for spring and summer terms. Are you serious about the things to be done?

Many young men in the Church have not yet committed to serve full-time missions, although President Kimball continues to make the appeal that every young man prepare himself to serve on a mission. When, young men, when are you going to become serious about the things to be done?

We have in attendance this morning approximately 1,000 full-time missionaries in training at the Missionary Training Center. You missionaries will depart very shortly for the mission field. Are you fully serious about the things to be done? Do you understand the magnitude of your responsibility?

In closing, let me illustrate, with two examples, how precisely and sometimes how directly the blessings of heaven are brought forth through sacrifice when one is fully serious about the things to be done.

During the semester I have been teaching a missionary preparation class, the Religion 130 course, on campus. Three or four weeks ago, I assigned the class members a project involving sacrifice and obedience, and I asked them to identify in their own lives areas needing improvement. I asked that they define what they would sacrifice to improve, how they would sacrifice, and when, specifically, they would sacrifice; and yesterday in our class we had a report. I just want to give you the results of an experience as presented by one of the young men. He said, “I work at a grocery store and I realized that I hadn’t been as diligent as I should be; I hadn’t been quite the employee that I ought to have been. I decided to sacrifice and come a little early, work more quickly, get my shelves stocked, and get things cleaned up.” He said, “Within two weeks I had a raise and a promotion. Perhaps the raise and the promotion would have come anyway, but I think not.”

This same young man had decided in regard to his classes that he needed to do something about his assignment of three term papers. He decided that he would spend four

extra hours a week working on those term papers and watch television just a little less. He said yesterday, "I submitted two of those reports two weeks early and received A's on both of them." The other report he will submit this week. I would suggest, brothers and sisters, that those results were not accidental. He did indeed sacrifice, in what seems to be a very mundane or simple way, yet almost immediately blessings came to him.

I am thinking of a young man at the Missionary Training Center a year and a half ago, preparing to serve in Japan. We had arranged with the BYU ticket office for all of the missionaries to attend the final home football game. They had tickets all arranged for us in the north end zone (hopefully, we can do a little better than that this next year—that seating is great if you do not want to see anything), and we announced to the missionaries that they would all be permitted to go to the ball game the next afternoon. This young man came in to see me and asked, "President Pinegar, do I have to go to the football game tomorrow?"

I thought he was ill. I said, "Don't you want to see this ball game?"

He said, "Oh, if you only knew how badly I want to see this game! I played college football for two years. But when I came to the MTC I made a commitment to myself and to the Lord that I would learn all eight of the missionary

discussions in Japanese. If I go to that ball game tomorrow, I will not achieve my goal."

Well, of course, permission was granted him to stay and study.

I saw him some weeks later. In fact, it was about five days before he departed for the field. He came up to me in the cafeteria and said, "President Pinegar, remember me? I am the elder who did not go to the ball game because I wanted to study the discussions. Today I pass off the eighth discussion." He continued, "You ought to hear what happened to me the day I stayed here and did not go to the ball game. Up to that point in time I had been able to memorize twenty lines a day in Japanese; that day, the day that I sacrificed—and I felt it was a sacrifice—I memorized 120 lines. From that point on, I continued to move up and today I will pass off my eighth discussion." His recall was approximately eighty-five percent.

Quoting President Kimball, "Unless those about us can see us striving and improving, they will not be able to look to us for example and they will see us as less than fully serious about the things to be done." I humbly pray that all of us will be fully serious about the things to be done as members of God's kingdom here on the earth. I bear witness of the reality of his kingdom and the fact that Jesus Christ himself directs the affairs of this Kingdom on the earth through his living prophet, Spencer W. Kimball. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.