

Necessities of Living

HUGH W. PINNOCK

President Oaks and brethren and sisters, I am delighted to be here with you this beautiful morning to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with some of the most important people in the kingdom—you.

I would like to discuss five concepts with you today, and my prayer is that these concepts might awaken in you latent thoughts that, once utilized, will make your time on earth more rewarding and exciting. They are these: one, there are thoughts that need thinking; two, there are ideas that need sharing; three, there are words that must be said; four, there are characteristics that need to be developed; and five, there are acts that should be performed.

First, what are these thoughts that need thinking? There are three of them. The first is this: What you are to be you are now becoming. In *Hamlet* Shakespeare's Ophelia said, "We know what we are, but know not what we may be" (act 4, sc. 5, ll. 42–43). Of course, the gospel had not been restored in the seventeenth century, so even Shakespeare did not really know what man could become; but we do, and this knowledge adds a dimension to our lives that cannot be realized by those who do not have the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Spencer W. Kimball became a prophet not on December 27, 1973, but when he was your age or perhaps even younger, because he was preparing himself for the great things that were to happen. We are becoming exalted today by the acts we perform, by the thoughts we think, and by the words we speak.

At the University of Utah—and I shall not speak those words any more often than I have to—there was a young sorority president, a wonderful musician, who was taught by her parents that her eternal position was being determined by her daily actions. Kathy McKay was an exciting date and a great example to everyone that knew her. One athlete from out of state became interested in the gospel of Jesus Christ just by watching her and recognizing her purity. She knew that the person she was to become she was then becoming.

There are many examples, but let me continue. The second thought that needs thinking

Hugh W. Pinnock was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 29 May 1979.

is this: Today might be one of your key days. Vince Lombardi, one of the greatest football coaches that has ever lived and taught, trained his players to give all they had in every play. He explained it this way: "In every football game there are only five or six key plays that determine the final outcome of the game; however, no one knows when those key plays will materialize, and so we must give all we have every play in order to stop the opposition from scoring or to score ourselves."

That is how life is, brothers and sister. There are only five or six or perhaps a few more key days in our lives—the day we decide to give all we are and all we have to the Lord Jesus Christ; the day we find that special person with whom we can hold hands throughout eternity; the day we say, "Yes, bishop, I will serve wherever I am sent." There are not many of those days; but we must live the very best we can every day, so when those key days come along we will respond properly and end up with the eternal reward that awaits all of us who are worthy.

The third thought that needs thinking is this: If you do not respond properly to a challenge, maybe no one will. My mind flashes back to Granite High School and a young lady there who had a number of problems. Economically speaking, she was very poor. She could not dress like the other students, and she was insecure and frightened. But there was a young man who knew her and who would say, "Hi, how ya doin'?" One day they were to take a test in history, and he said to her, "Let's sit down and study together." They did, and she could tell that she had value—not romantic value, but value as a fellow human being.

The weeks came and went, and then one day she confessed to that young man that he had saved her life. "What do you mean, I've saved your life?" he asked.

"Do you remember the day we had that history test?"

"Yes."

"I was going to take my life that day. I knew no one cared, that no one loved me. People made fun of the way I dressed and the things I said and the way I looked. But you cared, and because of that I'm still alive."

Incidentally, I saw that woman several years ago. She is a nurse now in Salt Lake City and is doing well, ministering to the needs of others. She is alive because someone who sat in class with her cared. Brothers and sisters, there are people that need you.

Next, there are ideas that need sharing. The first is this: The only effective decision-making apparatus in this life is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In theory, all of the great resources found within a nation can be used for that country's well-being; yet this magnificent nation in which we live is not making the type of decisions that are helpful or lasting, that are providing the stability we need. The philosophies of men are confusing, conflicting, cumbersome, and often contrary to the time frames within which we must live.

Our great educational institutions do much to facilitate our specializations and career preparations and little else, with the exception of BYU. I say that kindly, but believe it with all of my heart. Our educational institutions worldwide do not provide the type of decision-making capacities that we need to live at peace and in love with others; neither do the great corporations with their millions and often billions of dollars. But the more we utilized this incredible tool of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the happier we will be today, tomorrow (when our todays become yesterdays), and forever. It behooves all of us in this incredible environment of Brigham Young University to study, along with physics and behavioral theory and English and physical development, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that our decisions might be eternally helpful.

The second idea that I would like to share—and it is not unlike the first—is this: We function best in an environment of freedom. We

are free when we are independent, and we are totally independent only when we are completely dependent upon the Savior. The Master said, "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). He did all that he saw his Father do; may we emulate him as he emulated his Father.

Referring to freedom and our relationship with him, the Savior also said, "I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed" (D&C 98:8). Freedom, like inspired decisions, cannot come from any source other than the Savior. If we were totally dependent on the Savior, we could even find ourselves in prison and still be free.

The next and third part of my discussion is this: there are words that need saying. The first words that need saying are the most beautiful words of all: "I love you," and "I appreciate you." I talked on love at a missionary zone conference in Philadelphia one day, and during interviews a young man from Utah County, a former football player at American Fork High School, came up and said, "President, I've never told my dad that I love him."

I said, "Elder, we're not leaving this office until you do."

"I can't," he protested. "My father works for Geneva, and we can't reach him during the day; but I promise, president, that I'll call him tonight and tell him I love him."

I replied, "Elder, after you do, call me and let me know how it went."

After driving home from Philadelphia, I went through a tall pile of mail and did some dictation. Sister Pinnock went to bed, but I sat up for a while and wrote in my journal—still no telephone call. As I was finally going to bed, much later than I should have been going to bed, the telephone rang.

"President, I did it," he announced.

I said, "Tell me about it."

"Well, I was so frightened that I waited too long, and when I finally called, they had gone to bed. Mother answered the telephone, and because I had called late in the night on other occasions in my life, she thought I was in trouble; so I said, 'No, mom, everything's okay, but I must talk to dad.'"

She handed the telephone to her sleepy husband, who said, "Yes, son, what is it?"

The missionary son said, "Dad, I love you. I want you to know how much I love you."

His father began to sob and handed the telephone back to his wife, who demanded, "What did you tell your father?"

He said, "Mom, I told dad how much I love him, and I want you to know how much I love you." Then there was crying on both ends of the line.

Brothers and sisters, if you love and appreciate someone, it is a matter of integrity to communicate that fact, because it is not said often enough. I was speaking at a single adult conference in California a few weeks ago about this very topic when an individual jumped up and ran out of the meeting. I am fairly used to having that happen when I speak, so I was not alarmed; but he came back, and that was surprising. Afterwards we talked for a few minutes, and I asked, "Why did you leave?"

He explained: "It has been several years since I told my father I love him, and I couldn't wait until the end of the talk." He had run out and said, "Dad, I love you."

Whom have you thanked today? One of the things we tried to do in the mission field was to say "thank you" to someone each day, to express appreciation to someone deserving. What other words need to be said and said more often? These: "I know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God." When seventeen years of age, I took a date to the Garden Park Ward in Salt Lake City to a sacrament meeting followed by a fireside. Elder Richard L. Evans was the speaker. I cannot remember his topic nor any of

his words, except that he said, “Young friends, the gospel of Jesus Christ is true.” Those words pierced me like a sword; they were exactly the right words at the right time for a young man who was searching and stumbling. Someone needs to hear you say those words and to observe you living the way that you know you should live. Bear your testimony often; bear it to those nearby, because sometimes it is those nearby who need you the most.

I am reminded of the story that Elder L. Tom Perry shared with us just a few weeks ago at general conference time. It took place in the mid-seventies shortly after he had lost his first wife. Before one of the sessions of general conference he looked over where the wives usually sit, and of course his wife’s chair was vacant; she was not there. He stood up, ran outside the Tabernacle, and said, “I want to bring someone inside who would not have an opportunity to attend conference today.” Accordingly, he went right to the end of the line, found a lovely young lady, and introduced himself. After she had introduced herself as a student from Ricks College, he brought her inside and gave her the privilege of sitting in the seat that his wife would have occupied were she alive. During the session, he glanced over to look at her and observed tears streaming down her face. Afterward he went over and said, “I noticed that you were crying.”

“I had lost my testimony,” she explained. “I thought, ‘One last chance—I’m going to come to Salt Lake to attend general conference, and perhaps then I’ll know the gospel is true’; and then you came out and singled me from the crowd, brought me in, and sat me here. Even though I appreciate the great words that were spoken this day, it was your kindly act that let me know the gospel of Jesus Christ is true.” Each conference time, she writes a letter to Elder Perry, thanking him for his kindness.

Fourth, there are characteristics that need to be developed. What are they? The first is this: courage. I would suspect that a number of you

know Jim Moss; he teaches here. I would like to share with you two instances of courage from his life in order that you will know by his example what I mean.

The first occurred at that educational institution north of here by some forty-five miles—Brigham Young established that school also, I hasten to add. Jim was student body president there; and, because there are so many there that do not believe or do not understand, he searched for a way to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The idea came to Jim to honor President David O. McKay as one of their great graduates. He shared that with other student leaders, many of whom were not members of the Church, and they too became enthusiastic. So for one week, the life of David O. McKay, the things that he had taught, and the things that he knew to be true were written in the student newspaper, the *Daily Chronicle*. In a mass teaching effort, thousands learned something about the gospel of Jesus Christ because of the courage of Jim Moss, whose imaginative mind wanted to teach the gospel to others.

I will tell you another story about Jim. After a marvelous mission, he finished an outstanding career as an undergraduate. From there he went to Stanford, graduated in law, and received many fine offers to labor in top law firms. But Jim wanted to teach young people, and so from law school he became a seminary teacher. Now, of course, he is blessing us by his time here.

Another example of courage happened just a few days ago. While I was in one of our great Eastern cities, a young woman came to me and said, “This will be the most difficult half-hour I have ever spent; but I want to go on a mission, and I have not lived a worthy life. I must tell you what I have done; I must confess.”

As we sat there, the tears fell from her eyes as she told of a life that had been very difficult. Her relations with her father were almost unbelievable. She had experienced difficulty all through junior high school, high school,

and college. But she wanted to live the way she knew she could, the way the Savior wanted her to live; she wanted to tell others about this great gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, with all the courage she had and in a very awkward way, she confessed in order that she might serve and live free.

Another example: A missionary in Pennsylvania came to me and said, "President, there is something I have not confessed—when I was a young man, I often stole."

"How much did you steal, elder?"

"Oh, five or six hundred dollars worth of merchandise and sometimes money."

"Can you remember when you stole and from whom you stole?"

"Yes, I can."

I said, ""Then pay it back." The Spirit whispered to both of us that that is what he needed to do. "That means, elder, that you can't serve as a leader since you can't have an automobile, because every time you have another three or four or five dollars, you're to send it home."

He replied, "I understand, president."

Because of his family and other personal considerations, he said, "I can't go to the people I stole from until I return. Would you mail the money back to them?" I said yes; and so I sent envelopes to my friends living in Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, Saint Louis, and other cities, who would then forward the money in plain envelopes postmarked in cities far distant from where this elder was laboring.

About a year ago, I had the opportunity of sealing that young man in the temple; and one of the things he said was that the day his life really changed was when he had made full restitution. The Lord blessed him; he needed him to serve as a leader, but not for many months, because he needed to pay back that which he had taken.

Another characteristic that we must develop is that of personal authenticity. A number of years ago, at Universal International Studios, I watched the filming of television

programs and movies. It was delightful, with one exception. Everything that I saw was false—the sheriff's office, the jail, even the running rivers and sagebrush were made from plastic. As I was observing this artificiality, a beautiful young television star came up and asked, "How do you like what you see here?"

"I love it," I answered, "and I'm enjoying my self; but I'm sort of disappointed because everything is false."

She looked up and said, "But that's why we must be so real. The audience must focus on us."

And then I thought, "Oh, how true that is with life!" Almost everything we see outside in the world, brothers and sisters, is false; it is misdirected. That is why we must be so real, why we must be so honest, why integrity must be tattooed upon the spirits of us all.

In conclusion, brothers and sisters, there are acts that need doing. You are the most adequately trained college people the world has ever known. You have not only the finest training available, but also the gospel of Jesus Christ; these form a combination that cannot be found anywhere else. Therefore, the acts that you do today, tomorrow, and forever will affect countless others. What are these acts? The first is this: Being worthy. Staying worthy is a daily task. One of the saddest situations that I have observed lately is that of a marvelous man—top in his field, a wonderful Church leader—who, within twenty minutes during a period of discouragement, injured himself, hurt all of us that know him and love him, injured those in his profession, and impeded the direction of the Kingdom. He did not work to remain worthy every day. He slipped just once.

I am sure a number of you are familiar with John Greenleaf Whittier's poem "Maud Muller," which tells the story of a farm girl who had fallen in love with an attorney. (Dallin, that is a dangerous procedure at any time.) The attorney thought, "Well, perhaps I'd be more comfortable at home"; and she thought, "Well,

I know I'll be more comfortable with my friends in the rural setting." Despite their love for each other, they did not marry. The years quickly came and went as they do, brothers and sisters, and the poem ends this way:

*God pity them both! and pity us all,
Who vainly the dreams of youth recall.
For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"*
[L1. 103–6]

So many "might have been's" in life are tied directly to our remaining worthy.

It has been said that when your heart tells you things of which your mind is not sure, the Spirit is guiding you. If you will live the gospel of Jesus Christ every day, your future will be exciting and peaceful, and all of your innate potentialities will be realized.

What are some of the other acts that need doing? Life is here to be lived. Jump in; never stand off at the side, watching things happen. It is far better to be an awkward, struggling performer than to be a secure observer. Just the very act of living life should make our time on earth exciting, meaningful, and full of learning.

Another act that needs doing is the seeking out and developing of meaningful friendships and relationships. Some of my most enjoyable hours are spent with friends that I met when I was your age. Dr. H. Gill Hilton, Dr. Barbara Vance, Dr. James T. Duke, and a number of others at this institution are friends from twenty and twenty-five years ago. I shudder sometimes as I wonder, "What if those relationships had not been developed? What if those delightful people had not made the effort to be friends to me, and what if I had not expended the energy to earn their friendships?" These acts that require an expenditure of energy are the acts that need doing.

The great battles of this world often are not fought on the front lines but back in the general's tent, where tears are shed as difficult

decisions are made that mean the expenditure of lives and equipment. Still, those battles must be fought. Your great battles should not be fought in the back seat of automobiles when sexual temptation or moral conflicts are at their strongest; these great battles should be fought and problems overcome back in the general's tent. You must decide ahead of time how you are going to live; after the decision is made, all is easy. You will be able to travel in circles of people anywhere you feel secure, because you know that you will live the Word of Wisdom. Financially you will be secure because you know you will live an honest life and pay your tithes and offerings. You know from this moment on that you will live a secure life sexually because you have decided that there is a time and a place for everything. Make those decisions now, brothers and sisters, so that when you are on the battlefield all of the tough decisions will have already been made.

I would like to finish by sharing an experience that I had here last December. I came down at Christmas time and spoke to a small group of students; and sometime during my talk I made this comment: "The Lord forgives us in a millionth of a millisecond." I had talked of repentance, but only for a moment. Afterward a young man came up and said, "I don't believe I'm forgiven; I don't think what you said is right, Elder Pinnock."

I replied, "Well, perhaps I made a mistake—the Savior forgives us instantly. It doesn't even take him a millionth of a millisecond."

The young man faded away, and I went out and got into the automobile and drove home. Several days later the telephone rang and he reintroduced himself. "I'm the young man that questioned whether I had been forgiven or not."

I said, "You were forgiven, if . . ." and we reviewed the steps.

"Oh yes," he said. "I've talked to my bishop. I have not reverted to those things I did before."

"Then you are forgiven," I told him.

But the telephone rang once again. This time I said, "Listen, dummy, you are forgiven." But oh, how he wanted that feeling, and what a struggle he was having to obtain it!

Perhaps one of the acts that we need to do even today is to clear our life from the seaweed that sometimes hangs onto it. If your transgression was serious, go to your bishop and talk with him; bishops are a marvelously equipped

group of men serving the Master. You are not fair to your spirit, you are not fair to your friends or to your eternal self, and you are certainly not fair to the Savior if you carry upon your shoulders unresolved sins. May I finish by pleading with you to put your lives in order and to do all the things that we have discussed today and the other things that you know you must do, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Master. Amen.