

Ten Characteristics of an Educated Person

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Brothers and sisters, I am delighted to be here. In this vast audience we have singers of songs, builders of buildings, dreamers of dreams, cleaners of homes and dirty faces, writers of words, planters of crops, healers of wounds, and preparers of meals who this week have become learners in many areas.

I like the theme that this devotional assembly has been given: “Oh, God, Our Help in Ages Past, Our Hope for Years to Come.”

Education means learning from the past and from today and correlating that knowledge so that we grow in our relationship with God, who always extends to us hope for the future.

I thrill with you at the occupation to learn which you have assigned yourselves. One of the great learning experiences during the year anywhere is our own Campus Education Week. Your presence here today is evidence that education is not a destination but a highway we are to travel all the days of our lives. As I look upon this sea of faces, my brothers and sisters, faces of people who want to improve their own lives, I feel that a most appropriate message would center on the purposes of education in our lives.

As the apostle Peter wrote so many centuries ago, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal

priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). What “marvelous light” are you seeking this week? What did you come here expecting to receive? What you will obtain here is, in part at least, what you retain and take to your homes. Every person attending Education Week can return home feeling more secure, more comfortable in understanding his duty, and more “in tune” as a human being. It was John Dewey who so aptly said, “Education should teach how to think, not merely what to think.” And that, perhaps, should be an underlying goal for each of us: to think a little more clearly and wisely about everything than we did before.

Within the kingdom we talk of free agency, but only the educated are free (see Epictetus: Discourse II.1). Aristotle was asked to what degree educated men were superior to the uneducated: “As much,” said he, “as the living are

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to the dead" (Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, tr. C. D. Yonge [London: George Bell and Sons, 1891], p. 188). In his memoirs Edward Gibbon wrote, "Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: The first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself." Education Week is a blending of learning from your teachers, from those with whom you will associate, and from the time that I hope each of you will spend alone in meditation.

You are here because you want to be here. You are exercising your agency in a way that the councils of heaven would approve. Few have described the importance of education any more clearly than did H. G. Wells when he said, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe" (*The Outline of History* [1920], ch. 40). Oh how, in a very personal way, those words apply to each of us.

Yes, as we have been taught, the glory of God is intelligence (see D&C 93:31). We will take all that we learn here with us through our eternal lives, for that knowledge will rise with us in the resurrection. And "if a person gains more intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come." (see D&C 130:18, 19).

What are some of the marks of an educated person? May I suggest that they are far different from what many commencement speakers have portrayed. Someone once said as he began college, "I'm glad I'm a freshman. Only four more years until my education begins." Let me mention ten characteristics of an educated person. Perhaps these characteristics will serve as a checklist, so to speak, of what we are and may become when we stretch our minds and spirits.

First, a person can call himself truly educated only after he understands that spirituality is the strongest and greatest of forces and is

the foundation of all true learning. It is the link between Him and us! We read of the potential force of weapons that utilize atomic fission, but even the most destructive weapon ever produced is but a "snap, crackle, and pop" compared to the force and explosiveness of the Spirit. We have often heard the phrase, "With all thy learning, get wisdom." And I would like to add to that, "With all thy learning, get spirituality."

In a hospital not more than fifty miles from this beautiful building, an eleven-year-old boy lay comatose. He had been electrocuted while attempting to retrieve a kite that had blown into the electrical wires near his home. The parents had been given no hope. All muscle tone was gone. Medical science, with all of its marvelous equipment, was being utilized under the skilled hands of highly-trained medical people, but to no avail. Soon several men placed their hands upon that unfortunate boy's head. A neighbor had administered, and now the prayer was being offered by another to seal that anointing. As the last few words were spoken, slight movement began again, and the boy made a small noise. A miracle? Yes! And may we all understand that God's functions and procedures there and here are the true foundations of learning. Remember, the Holy Ghost has the assignment, as the Spirit of truth, to show us how to regulate all that really matters. May we never forget the importance of the burning within (see D&C 9:89).

The second characteristic of an educated person is that he can acquire facts and figures, correlate them in his mind, and then use them productively. The excitement of learning *per se*, as we absorb new facts from the pages of a book or from the lips of our teachers, brings joy immeasurable. Knowledge, whether it be knowledge of the Old Testament, of house plants and their care, of Roman architecture, of intermediate Spanish, or of a new dimension in social responsibility, makes us eternally different and more effective.

I remember with fondness learning the scientific names of the four species of trout that I was catching, the name of each fin, and the names of the insects I could see darting above the water as I fished. Suddenly fishing became even more exciting than before, just as the gospel of Christ did while I was in the mission field, memorizing Genesis 1:26–27; Acts 3:19–21; the fourth, thirteenth, and twentieth sections of the Doctrine and Covenants; Alma 7:11–15; and the other scriptures that, when learned, deepen our testimonies and improve our proselyting effectiveness.

A friend of mine in Hartford, Connecticut, and his lovely wife decided they wanted to know more about the British historian, educator, and political philosopher, Lord Acton. My friend is a medical doctor by training and a corporate officer in a giant insurance company by profession. But for one year this lovely couple decided to travel to Cambridge and research Lord Acton's life and learn more about England. They returned home filled with new facts and figures, having had an unforgettable experience.

Third, a person can consider himself to be well-educated only if he has the capacity to endure. The English author and medical doctor A. J. Cronin has thrilled all who have read his books. I remember reading of an experience he had before a single manuscript of his had ever been printed. He had given up writing because of discouragement and had thrown a bundled manuscript into the trash can. While walking down the lock shore a little later that day in a drizzling rain, he came upon his friend Old Angus, a farmer who was laboriously ditching a patch of the bogged and peaty heath. He reported to Angus what he had done. With disappointment in his voice, Angus said, "No doubt you're the one that's right, doctor, and I am the one that is wrong." He seemed to look right to the bottom of Mr. Cronin. "My father ditched this bog all his days and never made a pasture. But pasture or no pasture I canna help

but dig. For my father knew, and I know, that if you only dig enough, pasture can be made here." Cronin understood, he tramped back to his place of abode—drenched, shamed, and furious—and retrieved the soggy bundle from the trash can. After writing furiously for three more months, he had created a book that sold more than three million copies. He had learned the importance of perseverance. Later he said,

*But that lesson goes deeper still. Today, when the air resounds with shrilled defeatist cries, when half of our stricken world is wailing in discouragement: "What is the use . . . to work, to save, to go on living, with Armageddon round the corner?" I am glad to recollect it [meaning the experience he had had] in this present chaos. With no shining vision to sustain us, the door is wide open to darkness and despair. The way to close that door is to stick to the job that we are doing, no matter how insignificant that job may be, to go on doing it and to finish it. [See Lillian E. Watson, *Light From Many Lamps* (Simon and Schuster, 1951), p. 147–50]*

The virtue of all education, as those who have walked that lonely path of discouragement know, is victory over oneself. Those who know this victory will never know defeat. We are led by a great prophet-leader, Spencer W. Kimball, who, I suspect, has suffered as much physical pain, spiritual anguish, and discouragement as almost any man living. Through operation after operation and malady after malady he has continued to stand, guide, lead, and teach; he sets for us the supreme example. He simply does not know how to give up, and we are beneficiaries of his persistence and perseverance.

Each scientific discovery; each great book, painting, manuscript, or poem; and each attainment of dignified proportions comes from an individual who did not give up.

Fourth: Just as God is no respecter of persons, we need to have equal esteem for all of our brothers and sisters without regard for

gender, color, or anything else. Stereotyping simply is not a heavenly principle.

One gender is not superior to the other. This is a fact, I readily admit, with which many do not deal effectively. An understanding of our roles and responsibilities as brothers and sisters is another vital characteristic of the educated person.

Far too often we become embarrassingly aware of demeaning terminology and behavioral patterns that some will use or exert in reference to women. At the same time, the “sometime insensitivity” of women may force men into rigid “macho” roles, subconsciously denying them the broad range of human feelings that they need to express.

We cannot consider that which is called “masculine” to be more valuable than that which is defined as “feminine.” The two are complementary and mutually helpful. Yes, they are equally valuable, and each has unlimited potential. No one would deny that the male role in the Church is usually more *visible* because of the priesthood responsibilities of conducting and presiding, but certainly it is no more *vital* than the roles that women have.

Of course, there are differences between men and women; and three cheers for those dissimilarities! However, we are far more alike than we are different, and thank goodness for that, too! The gospel includes *no* double standard relating to the commandments, doctrines, or our eternal destinies. But we do persist in making mistakes and insensitive errors that cause hurt and reduce our effectiveness.

I feel impressed to say more. Personal attitudes brought from a different time and place sometimes cause some of the frustrations we feel in this delicate area. Isn't it time to explore our own feelings? Many ideas about gender differences simply are not spiritually, physically, psychologically, or socially viable. But where differences do exist, they are equal in importance, and the differences are usually absolutely necessary. We are all part of a grand

design. As we strive toward having mature and well-educated minds and spirits, may we accommodate this simple truth.

Both men and women are to have the same broad range of educational, social, vocational, and spiritual opportunities, as different as the opportunities might be. We should make these choices in a gospel perspective, remembering our eventual, eternal destiny. As literal brothers and sisters, we are to build, influence, lead, teach, and help each other.

I was talking to a recent convert to the Church in Virginia several months ago. She could hardly restrain her enthusiasm. She had found a “home” within her stake and ward where she could express her feelings, teach a class, know that she was loved and respected, and participate in a multiplicity of other ways. “Oh, Elder Pinnock, if only you could see the Church environment from which I have come, you would see why I am so happy,” she stated. Her local brothers and sisters made that difference. May we do likewise.

Fifth: An educated person recognizes the importance of here and now. All too often, we hear of someone who has given up because he or she did not have an opportunity for a formal education, had not traveled to the great cities of Europe and Asia, or had not been born into a more “advantageous” place or position.

A bright young man who aspires to be a writer said to me several years ago, “If only I could spend a year or two in New York City, New England, or perhaps London, I could write something worth reading.” I was reminded of two American writers who never traveled far from home: Walt Whitman who, with his own hands, set in type the first edition of his magnificent book, *Leaves of Grass*; and Henry David Thoreau, who was imprisoned for a short time for refusing to pay a tax that he claimed was a ploy to support slavery and who penned a little volume entitled *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*. Years later Mahatma Gandhi read this book and was inspired to

begin his campaign to free India. Ideas for poems, novels, political philosophies, and everything else worthwhile can be found everywhere, and often in unexpected places. Not in some other time or place, but right now, this year, today even, begin to work miracles in your life with the resources that lie nearby.

As I disembark from an airplane that has come from Anchorage, Alaska; Boston, Massachusetts; Merida, Mexico; or Montevideo, Uruguay, I am reminded that Joseph Smith perhaps traveled fewer miles in his entire lifetime than we do on some of our conference trips. The Savior of all mankind never left the eastern end of the Mediterranean basin during his lifetime. To be educated and happy, we must remember that it *can* happen here, not there, and now, not then or when. To labor, laud, laugh, and learn *today* is truly one of education's brightest keys.

Sixth: Each educated person will understand his mission to leave our environment a little better than he found it. A poem written, a garden free of weeds with straight rows, a strong and dedicated family, a motivating sermon, a helpful counseling interview, or the greenest grass and straightest fences on the street—all these make a difference.

President Kimball has often reminded us that we should paint our barns and rake our lawns. But any pursuit that makes the stairs a little less steep, an emotional burden a little less heavy, the environment a little less harsh, or the scenery a little more beautiful reflects the behavior of an educated person. Living a helpful life as well as making a living will inspire others to find themselves, to climb higher, and to realize their potentials. To make one's influence work for the common good is a vital part of the task of education.

I appreciate the art work of Arnold Friberg. Several years ago I was visiting him in his studio in Holladay, Utah, on a Sunday morning after priesthood meeting and Sunday School. He showed me his famous painting of George

Washington praying at Valley Forge and a number of other magnificent paintings and sketches. I observed that he was a little tired as we talked, until I asked him about a sign I noticed hanging on the wall which read, "I believe in God and Cecil B. DeMille." With renewed enthusiasm and excitement, he told me of his experiences with Cecil B. DeMille as *The Ten Commandments* was being produced and filmed. He told me how this tiny, yet powerful, man had improved the lives of all with whom he came in contact. "He inspired us to think big, in epic proportions," said Brother Friberg, "and I have never been the same. He made us all better." And that's what we're to do, brothers and sisters.

Seventh: An educated person respects facts and truth and seeks to see things as they really are. In 1973, Elder Boyd K. Packer called me into his office and reported the condition of a Church unit that came within my responsibility. His words were exact. He told the truth. He didn't embellish or diminish. He changed my perspective. Suddenly, I could see what to do. His explicit few words charged me with excitement, and my task became more simple because of the truth he spoke.

While I was studying economic theory some years ago, a professor said to me in front of a large class that an answer I had given lacked substance and exactness. "Mr. Pinnock," said he, "don't be fuzzy minded." I was embarrassed, but the point was well made.

As a person who wants to be educated, are you searching for facts? A friend of mine, Dr. L. Kay Shumway, believed that within a cell of a leaf lay the germ of an entire plant—roots, leaves, and stems. By pursuing that truth through lengthy experimentation, he and his assistants were able to grow an entire plant from just a cell.

A loving father and mother came to me several years ago wanting to know why their son was not doing very well. A day or two earlier, I had been informed that their son was

experimenting with drugs. After hesitating briefly, I told them this. They were shocked and did not want to believe what I had said. But they did, and immediately they began to do all they could to eliminate the problem. Eventually they were successful.

Perhaps tonight, or sometime soon, each of you could ask yourself those personal questions that, when answered factually, bring joy and progress: Where am I now? What do I need to do better? What do I need to learn in order to be more effective? Whom do I want to become? Yes, to be educated is to see things as they really are and not through the distorted lens of personal preference or desire.

The world progresses scientifically only as fast as it accepts facts. Often the sole reward for substantial and intensive effort is the discovery of a new truth, as our hymn so aptly states: "Yes, say, what is truth? 'Tis the brightest prize to which mortals or Gods can aspire."

Eighth: Each educated person, because of the great knowledge that has been poured out in this millennium, has a broader duty to use the knowledge given than almost anyone who has ever lived. That duty devolves on each of us. The more we learn, the more responsibility we must assume. Every week that I attend a stake conference I see men and women sacrificing to accomplish the responsibility to which they have been called. I have known a blind bishop leading magnificently in Wyoming, a Nigerian medical doctor with five college degrees serving humbly as a ward clerk in New York, an incredibly powerful business leader serving as an assistant Scoutmaster, an opera star teaching the *Mia Maids*, and a noted lawyer ushering the elderly in his ward to their seats.

Because Joseph Smith and others did their duty, we have the kingdom of God on earth.

Because Brigham Young and others did their duty, we have more than 350 communities, towns, and cities in the West.

Because Aurelia Rogers and others did their duty, we have the Primary, blessing the lives of thousands of children.

Because Karl G. Maeser and others did their duty, we have this great university.

Ignatius of Loyola was once playing a game of ball with his fellow students when someone asked, suddenly and solemnly, what each of them would do if he knew he had to die in twenty minutes. All agreed that they would rush frantically to church and pray—all but Ignatius. He had a different duty. He answered, "I should finish my game."

On 19 May 1780, during the anxious days of the Revolutionary War, darkness came to Hartford, Connecticut, at noon. It was a total eclipse of the sun. The people lacked the sophisticated predictive devices that we use today, so they did not know an eclipse was coming or even what one was. The bats flew and the chickens roosted. The sun, which was at its zenith, suddenly disappeared. As we can imagine, panic broke out. People thought that the end of the world was at hand.

In Hartford the state legislature was meeting. When the darkness set in, the meeting of the lower house broke up in alarm. In the state senate a motion was made for adjournment to enable the legislators to meet the Day of Judgment with whatever courage they could summon. But the motion was opposed by Abraham Davenport, a man who had been an adviser to General George Washington. Davenport arose at the height of this panic and addressed the senate as follows: "I'm against this adjournment. The Day of Judgment is either approaching, or it is not approaching. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles be brought." And they stayed in session. May each of us be found doing our duty.

Ninth: An appreciation of the arts and an appreciation of extraordinary effort also are characteristics of the educated person Educa-

tion should teach us both how to live and how to appreciate.

While visiting the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., I saw a lovely black lady standing before a painting by one of the Dutch masters. Tears of emotion were streaming down her face. The beauty of light and depth had touched her deeply. In that same museum were displayed ancient tools and artifacts created by a group of prehistoric people who lived in what we now call East Africa. There was an amazing emotional experience waiting for all who saw those ancient implements.

How exciting is the life of one who truly appreciates clean and functional architecture, classical music, beautiful photography, skillfully penned poetry and prose, great art, and other expressions of inspired, creative genius.

Once while visiting a vice-president's office in New England, I commented upon a Thomas Eakins print that hung upon his wall. He confessed he knew nothing of the artist or the subject. The original painting is in the Philadelphia Gallery of Art and is titled *A Pair-Oared Shell*. The scene is of the famous racing brothers Barney and John Biglin. I told him about the painting and the river it portrayed. After learning a little about Eakins, skulling, and the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia, he fell in love with his print and now calls it his favorite piece of art.

I had a similar experience in the Hemingway Gallery in Jamestown, New York. Mr. Hemingway, a delightful and sensitive gentleman, had a painting in his gallery of a Western scene. He confessed that he knew nothing of the artist, who happened to be John Fery (1865–1934), a Utah artist of whom I was aware. I told him a little about John Fery. Suddenly the painting was worth \$1,000 instead of the \$250 he had previously been asking for it, because now he knew the artist and his life.

I was delighted to learn of the new Museum of Church History and Art that will be constructed west of Temple Square. The

Church encouraged such early Utah painters as C. C. A. Christensen, Dan Weggeland, John Haffen, and James T. Harwood, to name a few, in their studies and even sent some to Paris to study art. Just as a concert hall, museum, or playhouse occupies a place of importance in any city, so should the appreciation and understanding of art, music, and the theater occupy a central place of importance in our lives.

The miracle of reading enables us to live many other lives and visit other lands, even outer space. We can share the cheers heard in Yankee Stadium or the standing ovation at the Met by reading biographies of Lou Gehrig, Joe DeMaggio, Enrico Caruso, and other luminaries. We can appreciate the graphic storytelling of America's great illustrators by reading of Andrew Wyeth, James Montgomery Flagg, Maxfield Parrish, or Salt Lake City's own John Held, Jr. We can visit the great opera houses and other music centers of the world by playing recordings of the great music of this and other ages and cultures. How fortunate we are.

Perhaps pianist Arthur Rubinstein said it best when on his eightieth birthday he was reported to have stated, "I am passionately involved in life. I love its change, its color, its movement. To be able to speak, to see, to hear, to walk, to have music and painting, is all a miracle." And that is what learning is: a miracle.

Tenth, and last, an educated person is characterized by deeper integrity and more Christlike morality. John Ruskin, the nineteenth-century English critic, essayist, and social reformer, said, "Education does not [just] mean teaching people to know what they do not know, it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave." Character development is one of the great aims of education. Through learning we find that the best way to repress faults is to create virtue. As we proceed with our education, we realize that to be more Christlike is the summation of it all. It has been said that "the poorest education that teaches self-control is better than the best education

that neglects it." Samuel Johnson wrote: "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful" (*The Reader's Johnson*, ed. by C. H. Conley [New York: American Book Co., 1940], *Rasselas* XLI, p. 254).

Our word for school comes from the Greek word for leisure. The Greeks, during their Golden Age, thought of leisure as the opportunity for moral and intellectual development and for participation in the life of the community. An education is truly incomplete if it teaches facts without instructing us how to live happily.

The theme of this devotional, "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past, Our Hope for Years to Come," reflects mightily upon the real reason that many of us are here. All of life echoes God, our Eternal Father, and Jesus Christ, his Son, who provide the hope that does spring eternal, the hope that all is well for those who prepare, repent, and respond to the Maker and Master of us all.

When Lord Kelvin, the great British physicist and inventor, at the end of his long life signed his name in the registrar of Glasgow University, he wrote "student" after his name. (See H. N. Casson, *How to Have Eighty Years of Youth*.) In 1919, Dr. Franklin S. Harris, of Utah State University, wrote, "If we had a knowledge of all the laws of the universe, we could make of earth a pretty good heaven" (*Improvement Era*, vol. 22, part 1, p. 328).

Yes, that is what a learning person discovers. Knowledge can make earth more heavenly and add joy and peace to our lives.

Wherever our Mormon forefathers went, new schools were quickly built. Education is an eternal tradition of the kingdom and should be an eternal tradition for each of us.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is impossible to be saved in ignorance and that a person is saved no faster than he gains intelligence. These teachings place education beyond its mere practical value and make it a religious principle.

Brothers and sisters, this morning we are talking of "inner ecology." Age does not destroy us nearly as effectively as ignorance does. Gutzon Borglum, the distinguished American sculptor (who, incidentally, was born in St. Charles, Idaho, of Mormon parentage), carved the four giants of American history on Mt. Rushmore in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Theodore Roosevelt inspired Americans during their lifetimes, just as they inspire us today. Many times Borglum was asked how he was carving giants and what makes a giant. And his answer was a philosophy that he had followed all his life. He said, "I can't tell you how to be a giant any more than I can tell you how to be eight feet tall. I can merely say, 'Grow.'"

May we all continue to grow, brothers and sisters, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Master. Amen.