

Prepare to Be Leaders

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My dear fellow students, I presume I can qualify as a student. It is always a pleasing and an inspiring experience to come to the BYU campus and meet you wonderful faculty members and students.

The Story of Karl G. Maeser

It is an interesting coincidence that I should be asked to speak at this devotional when the Karl G. Maeser Awards are being given to honored faculty members. Just a month ago I was in Dresden, East Germany, which is behind the Iron Curtain, on an assignment to hold conferences with the Saints in East Germany. When Sister Richards and I arrived in Dresden the Church leaders asked me what relation I was to the Franklin D. Richards who had baptized Karl G. Maeser. When I informed them that I was a grandson, it seemed to please them very much. Karl G. Maeser is certainly revered in East Germany as well as here. While we were there we visited Meissen, a small town not far from Dresden, which was the birthplace of Karl G. Maeser. Incidentally, there is a plaque possibly two feet by three feet on the home where he was born, reciting his birth and other matters relating to this life, including his conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints and his subsequent activities in Utah.

Karl G. Maeser's conversion to Mormonism is a most interesting story. It is said that he read a book about the Mormons which interested him very much, whereupon he and Edward Schoenfeldt decided to see what more they could learn about the religion. A letter of inquiry written by Brother Maeser eventually reached my grandfather, Franklin D. Richards, who was at that time president of the European Mission with headquarters in Liverpool, England. Grandfather appointed an Elder William Budge, who knew German, to visit Dresden and act as a private instructor to the family of Professor Maeser inasmuch as there was no religious liberty in Saxony at that time. Elder Budge carried out his instructions, and soon the word reached Liverpool that several persons in Dresden were ready for baptism and desired to be organized into a branch. Later, when President Richards and

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an Elder Kimball set out for the continent, one of their objects was to attend to these matters. Accordingly, on the fourteenth of October, 1855, eight persons were baptized in the River Elbe, one of whom was Karl G. Maeser. On the following Sunday at the Maeser home they were confirmed and organized into a branch. The *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia* (page 708) relates the incident as follows:

On the night of October the fourteenth, 1855, the three elders (Franklin D. Richards, William Budge, and William H. Kimball), Dr. Maeser, Edward Schoenfeldt, and some others, repaired to the banks of the historic Elbe, in which river Dr. Maeser was baptized by Apostle Richards. It was the first baptism in Saxony in this dispensation. After performing the baptism the party started back toward the home of Dr. Maeser. The only elder who could talk German was William Budge, and the conversation was carried on between Apostle Richards and Dr. Maeser with Elder Budge acting as interpreter. The colloquy had not proceeded far, however, when Apostle Richards told Elder Budge that it was not necessary for him to interpret any more, as he and Brother Maeser could "understand each other perfectly." Brother Schoenfeldt relates that it was a very dark night, and when he first realized that the two men were conversing together with perfect facility, yet neither understood the native tongue of the other, his feelings were indescribable, for he knew that it was a divine manifestation.

Dr. Maeser in later years testified that when he emerged from the water he prayed that his faith might be confirmed by some manifestation from heaven, and he felt confident that his prayer would be answered.

Dr. Maeser came to Utah, taught school for many years in Salt Lake City, and then fulfilled a mission to his native land. He later became head of the Brigham Young Academy at Provo, which later became the Brigham Young University. Subsequently he was made general superintendent

of Church schools and up to the date of his death continued to wield a wonderful influence for good over the young people of Zion.

At a banquet given in honor of a venerable educator in 1892, Apostle Richards, referring to the baptismal incident, said, "Brother Maeser, how blessed it was that the gift of tongues and interpretation was given to us. It always caused me joy. Brother Maeser did not know English, and I did not know German; but I could speak with him, and he with me. The Spirit wrought with us and filled us with faith."

Dr. Karl G. Maeser was an outstanding leader, and this great University since the time of Karl G. Maeser produced many leaders within Church, governmental, and business areas. It is indeed a pleasure and inspiration for me to address you, leaders of the future.

Organizational Leadership

Our complex society of today is built upon organization—governmental, religious, and social. This organization constantly requires more and more leaders, and this Church places great emphasis on the development of leaders. Leadership is the directing force of a movement and it is always coupled with opportunities—opportunities to serve. The dictionary defines opportunity as "a fit time, a favorable juncture of circumstances, a good chance." There is an old saying, "Opportunity knocks but once," but I do not believe this to be true. Opportunities are knocking every day for those who are prepared and willing to pay the price. However, you must develop the capacity to recognize them. I can already hear many of you asking, "How can I develop leadership capabilities?" Let me suggest three ways: number one, develop faith, courage, and determination; number two, develop the capacity to think straight; and number three, develop your talents. Let me discuss these three suggestions with you.

Faith, Courage, Determination

First, develop faith, courage, and determination. I am advised that President Henry D. Moyle told the British missionaries in 1959, "And I say that we can go out into the mission field, we can go out into the world, we can go into our lives and accomplish anything we desire to accomplish. Whenever the Lord calls upon us to do anything, he makes us equal to the task. The Lord bless us and give us the faith, the determination, and the courage. I love these words." I also love those words.

Do you believe that you can accomplish anything you desire to accomplish in righteousness? I do. But how? President Moyle says that faith is a requirement. In his *Lectures on Faith* the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "We ask then, what are we to understand by a man's working by faith? We answer, we understand that when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force" (Sixth Lecture, No. 3). Orson Pratt in his treatise on true faith said, "This is not an abstract principle, separate and distinct from the mind, but it is a certain condition or state of the mind itself." Effective faith does require mental exertion. And we must therefore learn to think and to think straight.

A leader must lead and not ask others to do things he is unwilling to do himself. A successful leader always rises above mediocrity. A leader is a great servant. The Savior expressed the ideal of leadership when he said, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:27). A leader has faith in people. He believes in them and draws out the best in them. Inasmuch as the development of faith requires study, we are counseled to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

Eternal progress involves continual study. Learning develops confidence and courage, and these banish fear. I encourage you to never cease to study, this being a really

important part of developing leadership capabilities. One of President Heber J. Grant's well-known sayings is "That which we try to do, and persist in doing, becomes easy to do, not because its nature is changed, but because our power to do is developed" (Josiah Gilbert Holland [Timothy Titcomb, pseud.], *Gold-Foil: Hammered from Popular Proverbs* [New York: Charles Scribner, 1859], 291). Again, perseverance assists in building faith, courage, and determination.

In developing faith we must never overlook the fact that we are spirit children of God the Eternal Father and that, as we do our part, our Father in heaven will bless us with courage and determination and assist us in obtaining our objectives.

As a mission president I emphasized to the missionaries the necessity of developing faith, determination, and courage. How successful I was is illustrated in the case of Elder Smith. Sister Richards and I met Elder Smith six years after he was released from his mission, and he told us the following story. He was seeking employment in a stock brokerage firm in Salt Lake and, after being interviewed in Salt Lake, was sent to the company's headquarters in San Francisco. In San Francisco there were two persons interviewing him, a young man and an older man with a big cigar in his mouth. The older man, who seemed to be the one with the authority, told Elder Smith he understood that he had been on a mission for his church. Elder Smith said he had. The man then asked, "What kind of a missionary were you?"

Elder Smith answered, "The best missionary in the mission."

The man was so startled by this forthright answer he almost dropped his cigar. He said, "If you were the best missionary in the mission, you're hired right now." Elder Smith had learned to apply the principles of faith, courage, and determination in his life.

Ability to Think Straight

Now I would like to speak with reference to developing the capacity to think straight. IBM, one of the largest and most successful U.S. corporations, has adopted the motto "Think" and uses it throughout the whole organization. House organs and individual signs on desks and walls say "Think." IBM recognized that thinking straight is a key to leadership ingenuity.

I recall that when I was studying law our dean used to tell us he didn't care whether we remembered the principles of law he was teaching us, but he wanted us to learn to think straight. To do this we learned that it was necessary to get the facts before reaching conclusions. He also impressed upon us the necessity of analyzing the facts from all angles in order to make sound decisions. I suggest that you learn to enjoy making decisions and get in the habit of living with your decisions. Reconsideration of a decision should only occur when additional, pertinent information is later available.

One of our real problems is finding the time to think. Richard L. Evans, in one of his sermonettes, said:

Always there is less time left—a fact that we sometimes face with feelings of frustration because we are so busy—too busy, sometimes, to think enough about what we are busy about. Could it be that we have enslaved ourselves somewhat with many unessentials? Can we avoid letting unessentials enslave us? Can we resolve to seek somewhat to simplify and to make a new appraisal of what we really consider essential—with a little more living, a little less of mere mechanics, a little less time on the treadmill, a little less of meaningless motions?

I am convinced that by simplifying our day-to-day activities we can find time to meditate. As an administrator in government, as an executive in business, as a mission president, and as supervisor of Church activities, I have

found it necessary and practical to set aside time to think or meditate. Think about your problem. What are the various aspects of it? What can you do to meet it or to solve it?

I suggest that if at all possible you plan your time so that you can have a regular time to meditate and think. How much time? Well, this depends on your specific situation. President David O. McKay put it this way: "Don't be too busy to meditate, and when the answer comes, have the courage to follow it."

As you meditate I suggest you keep an open mind. In keeping an open mind you will not restrict your thinking. Many times you might want the Lord to give you the answer to your problems, but you must remember that you have your free agency, and your responsibility is to make decisions. In the ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants the word of the Lord was given through the Prophet Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery with reference to his problems of translating. The Lord told Oliver Cowdery to study it out in his own mind, reach a decision, and then ask the Lord if the decision was right. And if it was right, he would receive a burning of his bosom. But if it was not right he would have no such feeling but would receive a stupor of thought.

This section of the Doctrine and Covenants describes a pattern that all of us can follow. We must study our problems out in our own minds, reach a decision, and ask the Lord to approve or disapprove. Then if we follow the whisperings of the Spirit, we will do what is right. These suggestions as followed will help you in developing the capacity to think straight, and this will greatly increase your leadership capabilities.

Development of Talents

Now I should like to refer to the third step, the development of your talents. Do you know what your talents are and how far they have been developed? During his earthly ministry the Savior gave the parable of the entrusted

talents, dealing with the requirement that we develop the talents we are endowed with. The talent was an ancient weight and money unit. The dictionary defines talent as “the abilities, powers, and gifts bestowed upon a man, natural endowments thought of as a divine trust, a natural capacity, or gift.” In the parable of the entrusted talents the Savior told of a man who was about to leave on a long trip. He therefore called his servants together and gave them his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. To each he gave according to his ability. While the master was away, the one that received the five talents put them to use and made five more talents. The one that received two talents put them to use and made two more. But the one that received one talent hid it in the ground. After a period the master returned and asked for an accounting. Unto the servants that had doubled their talents, the Savior said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” The Savior called the servant who had hidden his talent and had not multiplied it a “slothful servant” and said he would take the one talent from him and give it to the servant who had ten talents (see Matthew 25:14–28). From the man endowed with many talents, more is expected than from the man with lesser talents; yet all were expected to multiply such talents as they were given. However, although relatively little was expected of the man given one talent, he failed to use this talent. Good use of the talent on the part of the man given one talent was just as important and necessary as on the part of the men given two and five talents.

In this dispensation the Lord has been equally direct in his charge to us. He has told us that he has given us many things “for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even

an hundred fold” (D&C 82:18). He also admonished us that of him to whom much is given much is required:

But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of men. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them.

And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have. . . .

. . . Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known. [D&C 60:2–3, 13]

The Savior evidenced little regard for the slothful servant. He expects us all to work. These scriptures clearly emphasize our obligations to use and develop the gifts and talents we have been blessed with—shall we say, to develop the spark of divinity that is within us? We all have talents to a more or less degree. Often we find greater happiness in doing the things we have a special talent for. If it is not practical to use these gifts as a vocation, perhaps they will bring joy as an avocation. First we should recognize our talents and make up our minds to pay the price necessary to develop them.

Many times we fail to recognize our talents. A teacher had finished giving a lesson on the subject of talents. She had explained that the scriptures tell us everyone is blessed with special gifts or talents. This teacher played the piano beautifully, and a member of the class came to her and said, “Your gift is so obvious. I just can’t think of any particular talent that I have.”

The teacher answered, “When you speak of my talent as being obvious, you’re no doubt thinking of my ability to play the piano. This is not my *greatest* talent. My faith is my greatest talent or gift.”

The member paused for a few moments and then said, "I have great faith too. I have never thought of it as a talent, but it really is, isn't it?"

Each of us should be encouraged about how to best develop our gifts and our talents. The price to be paid in developing talents certainly includes persistence. I cannot emphasize too greatly the necessity of persistence. The world is filled with talented people who gave up, especially when the going was rough. We should appreciate that talents are developed by use, and they will not grow and multiply unless they are used. Some recognize their talents; but, we are told, they do not use them because of the fear of men. Fear destroys faith and deprives us of many blessings. This is certainly brought out in the revelation when the Lord said, "Ye endeavored to believe that ye should receive the blessing which was offered unto you; but behold, verily I say unto you there were fears in your hearts, and verily this is the reason that ye did not receive" (D&C 67:3). We must therefore overcome fear. The Lord has told us that if we are prepared we shall not fear.

One of the important and distinguishing features of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that its affairs are administered by the lay members of the Church rather than by a paid clergy. I have been told by some of my nonmember friends that the thing that has impressed them most about the Church is that it gives every person a chance to serve and to develop leadership capabilities, regardless of his age. How true this is.

As we develop our talents, we should develop the spirit of sharing or giving—not only with those who are closest to us, but also with all of God's children. Remember the words of King Benjamin, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). The Lord wants us to enjoy our talents. But he also expects us to use them for the enjoyment and benefit of others and to build the kingdom

of God. Talents may be developed in many church activities, such as teaching, speaking, missionary work, music, drama, dancing, athletics of all kinds, scout work, genealogical and temple work, welfare programs, compassionate service, and many other fields that might be mentioned—all contributing to the development of leadership capabilities.

Sometimes we may think that we have too many opportunities to serve and develop our talents and feel too much of a sacrifice is required. Let me suggest, however, that we do not consider it as a sacrifice but as a great blessing. Each activity that we participate in provides experience whereby we may improve our talents, thus contributing to our goal of effective leadership. As we develop the spirit of giving and sharing, we find great peace, happiness, joy, and contentment as well as growth and development. May I therefore encourage you to accept every opportunity presented to you to serve with enthusiasm, not as a burden but as a great blessing. I know this, that as you develop your talents and persist, your leadership abilities will be magnified and your talents will increase, yea, even an hundred fold. As you are given positions of leadership in the Church, business, professional, and civic areas, remember to seek first the kingdom of God. As our Heavenly Father has promised, then all else will be added unto you.

In summary, I feel that all of you are interested in developing your leadership capabilities and in assuming positions of leadership. As you increase your faith, courage, and determination, develop your talents and capacity to think straight, your leadership is bound to be more effective and meaningful. Effective leadership opens the door to more effective ways of doing things. Again, this invariably means greater success, and greater success means more joy and happiness and growth and development. Despite the fact that we are living in a troublesome period, we are living in the dispensation of the fulness of times—a most

wonderful period in the history of the world—yes, in a new era of growth and development. Opportunities today for young and old exceed those of any other age. We should be grateful to live at this particular time when the Spirit of the Lord is being poured out upon the people of the earth so abundantly.

I bear you my testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, that the gospel of Jesus

Christ in its fulness has not only been restored in this latter day through the Prophet Joseph Smith but that the power to act in the name of God has also been restored, and that there is a prophet of God with us today, our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball. May the Lord bless and sustain him and may the choice blessings of our Father in heaven be with you, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.