

“Even If All, Not I”

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The Lord has said to all of us, “Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”¹ Welcome to all of you wonderful young men and women who are moving forward in your lives to acquire knowledge and to use it to enhance your futures, both intellectually and spiritually. Our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said, “We live in a world where knowledge is developing at an ever-accelerating rate. Drink deeply from this ever-springing well of wisdom and human experience.”²

My dear friends, these schooling years pass quickly. I can attest to that fact. Having the wonderful opportunity to be in your midst often gives me many opportunities reminiscent of my university experiences. They seem like a long time ago, but the time between then and now seems to have just whizzed by so rapidly.

Your education is the road to many wonderful opportunities. This is a defining and refining time of your lives. Plato said, “The direction in which education starts a man [or woman], will determine his [or her] future life.”³ Your Brigham Young University education can bless your lives as well as those of your immediate family, descendants, church, and community. My experiences in university

life—now and in the past—have influenced my life in so many different ways. Yours will do likewise. It is also true that friendships made at these times will last a lifetime.

About four months ago my husband and I were having dinner with such friends. I noticed that above an archway in their home they had placed some printed words. They were in Latin, and I did not know what they meant. These were the words: “Et si omnes ego non.”

I was curious as to what they meant and why they had them in such a prominent place in their home. I was told that their translation was, roughly: “Even if all, not I.” In other words, “Even if everybody does it, I will not.” They proceeded to explain to me that the saying was the motto of the Barons von Boeselager, an old German noble family. Two descendants in the family, Philipp and Georg von Boeselager, were members of the resistance group that had planned the failed assassination attempt on Adolph Hitler on July 20, 1944. Their involvement in the operation went undetected, and they were not executed along with

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the majority of the other conspirators. The saying is carved in a timber beam on the outside of Philipp's family home in Germany.⁴

Our friends explained that they used this quote as a motto for their family and that it was a reminder to them that they are members of a chosen generation and must be different in the world of today. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they should make choices consistent with the teachings of the gospel and shun the negative, misleading, and evil messages of the world that surround them.

How many of you can remember when you were a small child? For some of us here it is a stretch, but for you it should be relatively easy. Can you recall when you and your friends wanted to do something and you had to ask permission of your parents? If they hesitated in the least in saying your desired response of yes, did you ever say, "But, Mom (or Dad), everybody else gets to do it"? I tried that ploy quite often. Or I might have said, "Sally's mom is letting her go."

I love the story told by President Hinckley of the time he learned about having the courage to make his own decisions and not "follow the crowd." The year that he started junior high school, the building was not large enough to accommodate all the students, and his class had to return to the elementary school. He and his friends were not very happy, so the boys decided that they would go on strike and not attend school the next day—and they didn't. They had no place to go, so they just wandered around wasting time.

The next morning, the principal, Mr. Stearns, met the boys at the front door and told them that they had to have a note from their parents to be able to return to school. Young Gordon went home and reluctantly approached his mother, who knew something was wrong. He told her the situation.

She did write him a note, which read, "Dear Mr. Stearns, Please excuse Gordon's absence

yesterday. His action was simply an impulse to follow the crowd."⁵ President Hinckley stated, "I determined then and there that I would make my own decisions on the basis of their merits and my standards and not be pushed in one direction or another by those around me. That decision has blessed my life many times."⁶

During the last general conference in April we were warned many times concerning the fact that the world of today is shifting in its values and standards. We cannot nor should we live secluded from the world around us. It is indeed an exciting time to be alive, but it is also one that is fraught with danger both physically and spiritually. The adversary is very subtle and deceitful and will entice you any way possible to get you to "follow the crowd" or succumb to the evil ways of the world. He would have you ignore and not understand the blessings and promises available to you because of the Lord's great love for you.

What are some of the messages we hear from many of the "world crowd"? You who are students here today live in a very different world from that experienced by your parents and many others of us here.

From all types of media we are shown and told that chastity before marriage and fidelity afterward is not the norm in dating and marriage today. However, the Lord tells us: "Be thou an example of the believers . . . in purity."⁷

You are given many examples of how to dress and look. There are examples for both men and women. The pressure can be strong to "be in style." However, we are constantly taught by our Church leaders that "modesty in dress is a quality of mind and heart, born of respect for oneself, one's fellowmen, and the Creator of us all. Modesty reflects an attitude of humility, decency and propriety."⁸

We live in a world where success seems largely measured by possessions and professional status. To many the manner of obtaining these often seems to be of no consequence. This

can also apply to university experiences and studies as you strive to achieve high grades, earn degrees, and gain desired employment positions. Qualities such as integrity, charity, honesty, and spirituality often are thought to be of less value than the means of obtaining what is assumed to be outward signs of success.

There may be the pressure and desire to have the largest house, the best car, expensive clothes, and so forth. Our Church leaders have warned us against unnecessary buying and cumbersome debt. It may be necessary to borrow for an education and, at appropriate times, an affordable home and other necessary items. However, we are constantly counseled to stay out of debt by purchasing wisely and living within our means. Do not be unduly swayed or influenced by those around you to do otherwise.

My dear friends, in the world today our voices can be heard as we speak of and stand for our convictions of truth and righteousness. I love the example in the Book of Mormon of Captain Moroni, of whom it was said:

*If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.*⁹

Oh that such could be written of us as we stand for and speak of our beliefs!

As I see you here today and around the campus, my heart is filled with admiration for the wonderful lives you live and the examples you are to the world. I would love to know each one of you personally. However, you are 33,000 strong; therefore that is impossible. I do, however, have a testimony that you can stand up to worldly influences that would draw you away from your beliefs and say, in mighty voices, "Even if all, not I." Those who see and hear you can know of your testimonies of the Savior and our Father in Heaven.

Elder David B. Haight said it this way:

*You need not look just like the world; you need not entertain like the world; your personal habits should be different; your recreation will be different; your concern for your family will be vastly different. If you establish this distinctiveness firmly in your life pattern, only blessings await you for doing what is right.*¹⁰

It would be the desire of those who love and lead you in many areas of your lives that you follow the admonition of the 13th article of faith, which reads:

*We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul — We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.*¹¹

That we may all do so would be my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. D&C 88:118.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Three-Point Challenge," BYU commencement address, 27 April 1995; excerpt in *TGBH*, 171.
3. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, book 4 (Adeimantus).
4. See www.answers.com/topic/philipp-von-boeselager.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Some Lessons I Learned as a Boy," *Ensign*, May 1993, 53.
6. "Some Lessons," 53.
7. 1 Timothy 4:12.
8. *Priesthood Bulletin*, September 1970, 2.
9. Alma 48:17.
10. David B. Haight, "You Are Different," *Ensign*, January 1974, 42.
11. Articles of Faith 1:13.

