

Remembering and Honoring Your Covenants

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Since it is the beginning of a new year, now is the perfect time for all of us to take the opportunity in the days ahead to reminisce over the past year. What would you judge to have been your accomplishments during those days, weeks, and months? What could you have done to achieve more if you feel you didn't meet a goal? It is now 2011, and 2010 is completed. Therefore, welcome back to a new year at Brigham Young University, where you will have more opportunities for success in reaching desired goals. Do not unduly dwell on regrets of the past; rather, use them as an impetus to better yourselves in the future.

It is time to move forward, and as you do, always acknowledge and be grateful for the many blessings afforded you by your parents, friends, faithful Church members worldwide, academic and ecclesiastical leaders, and, most important, your Savior, Jesus Christ, whose birthday we just recently honored with the Christmas season. We are all admonished in Helaman 5:12 to "remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; . . . which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall." Acknowledge and remember Him in every aspect of your lives.

As my children were growing up, I saved their school papers and projects, letters, awards, and other items, thinking that someday they would want these memories for some future purpose. As I was going through the collection I had saved for my oldest son, I came upon a note that had been written by a 14-year-old boy to him when he was serving his mission. I will call the young man John. My son had kept the note with others he had received while in the mission field. I began to read it and found that the contents included some news of the day that John felt would be of great interest to my son, including sports scores and such.

At the conclusion of the short letter, John stated how excited he was to serve his mission in five years. Many years had passed since that message was written, mailed, and received. When I finished reading it, I had a sad feeling, because I knew what John had chosen to do with his life in the ensuing years since he had written the note. John had attended his church meetings in his youth. However, during his teenage years he used his agency to make

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choices that led him on paths that took him in different directions than he had once intended. He never went on that mission that he had once been so excited to experience, and serious problems have plagued his life. He is now an adult and not active in the Church, but he is close to his family. His parents find comfort in the principle of repentance and pray that someday John may seek such in his life.

I once heard a stake president, in speaking to a group of young adults such as you, state that whenever he interviewed young men or young women who were having some serious problems in their lives, he most often came to the same sad conclusion: they had forgotten the covenants they made at baptism. Had they not done so, they most likely could have avoided their present situations. John forgot the promises he made when he was eight years old. When John was baptized, he made a covenant with his Heavenly Father—as we all did when we were baptized. We promised “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in” (Mosiah 18:9). It is the Lord’s desire that each of us be a witness for and possess a sure and personal testimony of Him.

President Gordon B. Hinckley referred to you as a chosen generation and stated it often. In a session of general conference he said:

Each time I have stood before such a group, there has come into my mind the great and prophetic statement made by Peter of old. Said he: “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 marvellous light.” (1 Pet. 2:9.)

*I know of no other statement which more aptly describes you, nor which sets before you a higher ideal by which to shape and guide your lives. [“A Chosen Generation,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 69]*

President Hinckley knew that you could be witnesses of your Savior in today’s world.

President Thomas S. Monson, our present-day prophet, has the same confidence in you. He believes you can measure up to the most difficult challenges. You are part of the Lord’s plan that was presented in the premortal world. Shouts of joy were heard when you accepted this journey. I don’t believe that you have come at this time and place by accident. It is a time when you, as servants of the Lord, are to strive to take the message of truth to all the peoples of the earth. You are to be witnesses of God in your beliefs and actions at this time and place.

The world is experiencing a great fight between righteousness and wickedness, and you are surrounded by this battle. Millions of people on the earth today live wholesome and good lives, but the adversary is striving to destroy moral and ethical values, and he is gaining supporters from the children of our Heavenly Father. He is having us abandon any use of the name of God in public meetings or places. He is attempting to destroy the family unit and striving to have parents relinquish their parental responsibilities. In far too many instances he is succeeding. The stigma that in the past was attached to dishonesty, immorality, lack of integrity, and impurity is disappearing.

The Savior said that conditions toward the end of this dispensation would resemble those that existed just before the Flood. In Matthew 24:37 we read, “But as the days of Noe [Noah] were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

However, you have also come at a time when you are blessed with the gospel of Jesus Christ and have the promise that it will never again be taken from the earth. It is a period known as the fulness of times. Prophets through the ages have written concerning this dispensation. It is indeed a wonderful though challenging time to be alive. You have a prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, to lead you. He is the Lord’s mouthpiece at this specific time and place, and he will teach and

guide you as you hear, listen, and obey his words. You are the beneficiaries of those who have gone before you. They have enabled you to enjoy the gospel in your lives, to sit in this audience, and to attend this wonderful university, where you may study in an environment of faith and truth.

To stand as witnesses of God at all times, in all things, and in all places means that you love the Lord and will represent Him every hour of every day. He is your Exemplar, and thus your thoughts and actions should reflect Him in every place in which you stand and in everything you do. This, of course, is all encompassing in your life. It means you stand as witnesses of Him in the classroom, on the playing field, in the car, in your home, on a date—everywhere you are at any time and in all things.

At times it may take courage to speak as a witness of our Savior. The world of today is surely finding you a peculiar people, as stated previously in the scripture found in Peter. You are finding yourselves separated from the standards accepted by many people—even leaders and misleading models of today’s society. This separation, as well as distinction, is only going to widen and become more prevalent as the teachings of our Savior continue to be discounted and even ridiculed by those who seek to stop the work of the Lord with the help of the adversary. There are going to be times when the rift between the truth and falsehood is going to be even wider than it is now.

You may fear to open your mouths as witnesses of the truth. I know that I too have felt this way. On such occasions, two scriptures always come to my mind. They are both found in the Doctrine and Covenants. The first one reads: “That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world” (D&C 1:23). This is often referred to as a missionary scripture. However, you are missionaries when you bear testimony of the mission of your Savior and are witnesses

of Him. I know that at times you may feel you are indeed weak and simple and thus feel intimidated and nervous when you are surrounded by those you may deem more learned, brighter, and more well-known in circles of society who may or may not be seeking the truth. Remember that the Lord and the Holy Ghost will help you open your mouths so you may speak the words that are in your heart.

The second scripture states: “For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God” (D&C 3:7). Have you found that you are fearful of giving offense to someone by speaking boldly of your belief in gospel principles? Are you worried that you will hurt someone’s feelings or maybe even lose a friend by walking away from something you feel is unsavory or even evil? Do you fear being ridiculed and taunted for your beliefs? In times such as these you have to make eternal choices: whether you will serve man or God. When you stand as witnesses of your Savior, it should always be done with the spirit of the Holy Ghost guiding you. Being overbearing or filled with self-righteousness will not accomplish your intended meaning and will only turn others away.

You are here on a divine mission with wonderful promises and blessings available to you from your Heavenly Father. Remember the purposes for which you have come to earth. You have missions and miracles to perform for your Heavenly Father and prophecies to help fulfill. As you complete your education here, you will go out into the world hither and yon. You are the future leaders of the Church, of your communities, and, most important, of your future families. Let your influence be felt by those who know and love you by being true and faithful representatives of Jesus Christ.

Yes, the young lad, John, did forget what he had promised his Heavenly Father when he was baptized many years ago, and thus he was drawn away from the teachings he had as

a youth. He also forgot what Heavenly Father had promised him if he kept his covenants of serving the Lord and keeping His commandments. The Lord promised John that if he remained faithful, He would pour out His spirit more abundantly upon him (see Mosiah 18:10). As you take the sacrament each Sunday, you do it in remembrance of the Savior and the covenants you made at your baptism. You are recommitting to serve as His witness to the world. It is a time for you to remember your baptismal covenants and let them guide your lives each day so that you do not forget as John did.

“Enter to learn; go forth to serve” is often quoted on this campus to remind you of your

purposes while at BYU and once you leave here. As part of my message to you today, I would just like to add to that admonition and ask you to “enter to learn; go forth to serve” as you stand as witnesses of Jesus Christ at all times, in all things, and in all places. I do have a testimony of our Savior Jesus Christ. I know that He loves us. I know that we have a prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, who loves each one of us and will guide and lead us back to our Heavenly Father. It is my prayer that each of us will always remember and honor our baptismal covenants and always stand as witnesses of our Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.