

“Fill the Measure of Your Creation”

by
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Thank you President Woodhouse. It's great to be with you here this morning. I didn't know what to expect when they told me I was speaking at a devotional of a business college. I thought you would be stiff business people here this morning, and I came prepared to address you that way. I didn't know it was a devotional. I hadn't thought about it until this morning, and my secretary informed me, "These are just good LDS students going to school here." I recognize some of you, having taught you in the mission field, and seen you in zone conferences. It feels a little like a zone conference this morning, to be with you and feel your spirit of wanting to know, wanting to learn. That is what is so exciting about teaching missionaries. I sense that from you. My thoughts have been mixed, and though I have a prepared text you probably won't hear very much of it this morning. I just want to visit with you about where you are in life, where you are going, how I can help, how the church helps, and how the president of the church helps.

I recently read a book, "The World According to Peter Drucker," by Jack Beatty. I hope you all know about him. Anybody that is going to a business college needs to know about Peter Drucker, so if you don't, find out who he is because he is considered the father of modern business management.

You are here in school to learn about business. As I read this book I saw so many parallels in a gospel context. Peter Drucker's motto was, "Born to see, meant to look." I am fascinated by this world we live in. I really believe that we were born to see and meant to look. That is why we came here. I want to learn everything about the world I can. I believe the Lord sent us here to find out about it. I think that is what he intended, when he told Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it. He wanted you to look it over, see what's here, and make the best

of what is around you. I hope, in your sojourn here, I can help you in this discovery, so while you are here it can be a happy experience, for our purpose in being here is to be happy. He also said, "I have to see the whole, everything before I can go to work. I have to see it first, I have to hear it first." And then he talks about having taught subjects on business management for years. But only as he taught did he come to understand it. The glorious thing about being a Latter-day Saint is that we all have the opportunity to explain who we are, what we do, and why we're here. That is why we go on missions, that is why we teach Sunday School.

During the Southern Baptist Convention, I had the opportunity of meeting with ten of the prominent Baptist ministers, of the Southwest Area. (I am going to miss the Southwest Area as I am now going to the Mexico North Area. As of Monday, we will be living in Monterrey, Mexico. You see Seventies live in a temporary world, with a temporary assignment because we go when and where they send us. It was just two and a half weeks ago, President Monson called me into his office and said: "Brother Mickelsen how, long have you been home from South America? It hasn't been very long has it?" I said, "Well, it has been three years." And he said: "Well you ought to stay longer but we need you in Northern Mexico. You can take all of the time you'd like getting ready as long as you are there by the 25th.") During the Southern Baptist convention, I had dinner with these ministers and had a marvelous experience. I sat next to one, who is a very Billy Grahamesque figure. He is wealthy, he dresses the part, he looks the part, he has a charisma that made me envious. While eating our lunch I said, "Tell me about the convention. What is the purpose of it, and what do you do?" He said, "Well, we come together as churches to talk about better ways to teach, better ways to build up our congregations. That sort of thing." I said, "How do you decide who is in charge?" He said, "We elect a chairman, in

fact, I was chairman of the convention two years ago." I asked, "Is there any kind central organization in your church?" He replied, "Each congregation is autonomous in its place and we build up our own congregations, of course after going to seminary, and we all teach from the Bible." Then an interesting thing happened. As he started to explain how fragmented they were in their organization he realized he was getting in too deep and stopped, almost mid-sentence, turning to me he said, "Tell me about your church. How is it organized?" He couldn't have asked a better question. I responded. "We are led by a prophet of God, who has two counselors, and a council of twelve apostles." He then asked, "Where do you come in, and what do you do?" "Well," I said, "I am in the next layer of hierarchy, a Seventy, as spoken of in the ancient scriptures, it is an apostolic commission. We go in place of the apostles when they are unable to go."

"How do you get to be a Seventy?" You know these questions couldn't have been programmed better, "Well, I grew up in the Church. I was ordained a deacon when I was twelve years old. Every worthy male in the Church can receive the priesthood when they are twelve years old. When they are fourteen, sixteen and eighteen, they are advanced in the priesthood. I then served a mission for the Church in Central America. I came home, continued my education, married, and started my profession of farming. At a young age, I was called to be a bishop in the Church, to preside over a small congregation, and then a stake president, where there are five, ten, up to twelve congregations. After this assignment, I was called to be a mission president in South America." I clearly explained to him that it is a lay ministry, that we don't go to seminary to learn what we teach, but we learn by participating and that we are not paid for our service.

I think that was what Peter Drucker was talking about. "Born to see, meant to look." In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we learn by participating. It was a beautiful experience to be with those men that day, and to be able to tell them about the monolithic structure of the Church, about a prophet of God, and how we follow him. The question was asked, "Why did you want to go to South America?" I said, "It wasn't a matter of want, it was a matter of going where the Lord asked me to go. We believe all calls come through inspiration from the Lord." What a contrast, what a difference! I was so grateful to be a Latter-day Saint. I hope you are also grateful for this marvelous blessing.

Peter Drucker said, "Try practicing simplicity of description. It is not easy, but the more you practice describing things clearly, the greater the ability to see clearly." And then he said, "Practice seeing the obvious," and I thought about this experience with the ministers. You see, all I did was explain the obvious. Sometimes we get entangled trying to explain too much.

I suppose you've heard about the 20 second elevator interview: when you are on an elevator and you have just 20

seconds between floors, what would you say if someone were to ask you, "What do you believe, what does your Church teach?" You have 20 seconds to describe that. I think we all should take this challenge and be prepared to explain what we do, who we are, and what the Church is, in a very concise statement. Take time to think and to write a concise statement of what the Church is. It will focus you.

As I go about teaching missionaries I tell them, "The longer I live the less I know. But the better I know what I know." I used to think that I knew a lot of things. But information is one thing, knowledge and understanding is another. Sometimes I will ask missionaries if they have a testimony of the omniscience of God. And usually they will say, "Of course I have a testimony of the omniscience of God." And then I will respond with something like this. "I am not sure I do." I can explain it, but I am not sure I have a testimony. My testimony is based on simple things. This I know, "God is my Father. I was created in his image. Christ is his Son. Through his atonement I can get back to live with my Father." Those simple concepts are the things that are important.

It is amazing how few people know what they are good at. Yet that is why we are here, to discover that knowledge. And sometimes we depreciate and disparage the things we are good at. If it comes easy, too often, we are lazy and don't develop it. Something that comes easy is a gift, and should be developed, enhanced and magnified.

Most schools tend to concentrate on problems more than on strengths. I hope you help others find their strengths-- the things they can do, that which they have the capacity to do. Help every man to find his personal gifts. Some of you are artists, you think with the right side of your brain. Don't let that depreciate and deteriorate. If you are an artist, develop it, but at the same time, don't let the left side decay either. In business, in doing the kinds of things you are preparing to do, if you are specializing in computers you learn the simple processes of computation or word processing, but you don't learn what is behind that. Learn those things. Learn all you can. Watch your leaders. Try to emulate them. I was recently with Elder Russell M. Nelson in a regional conference. He notices everything and wants to know about it. That is how he has developed his gifts. He was not only an eminent heart surgeon, but he is a musician as well. He is blessed with a gift for music, and has developed a perfect pitch. That is a miracle to me. I love music, I love to sing and I understand enough about music to know what a marvelous gift perfect pitch is. I couldn't comprehend how anyone could have that gift until our youngest son came along. And I saw it develop before my eyes. When he was five years old, his mother started him playing the piano. It's hard to keep the attention of a five-year-old playing the piano. But when he experienced his gift and started, he could feel the music. It was such a joy to him he would sit at the piano and play for hours. Today, at

your age, he has developed a perfect pitch. One can start singing any note of the music scale, and he can sit at the piano and play in the same pitch. Gifts are extremely valuable but don't seek for what someone else excels in. It is easy to be tempted to go after what someone else does well. If it is worthy of emulation you might want to try that, but find your own excellence and develop the gifts within you, those you were born with.

A few years ago our son-in-law decided to go into zoology. I said, "Dave, what are you going into zoology for? The only thing you will be able to do is teach, or do research." I had no vision for zoology and was looking at it from a strictly financial point of view; then I added, "Dave, you will always be poor."

In my life, as an entrepreneur, I tried to make money. The entrepreneur has a tendency to assume that everybody should be an entrepreneur, but not everybody can be. You need to excel at the gifts that are given to you. Dave just finished his doctorate at LSU and is going to Japan to work on a post doctorate with one of the most prestigious research zoologist in the world. He started his research in gene mapping of rodents. That has lead him into molecular evolution where he is charting new territory never before discovered. That is our son-in-law, and I thought he was going nowhere in zoology.

The common scientific thought is that DNA changes are random. You probably understand this, but he had to explain it to me. He is building a paradigm that demonstrates there are constraints, that DNA changes are not random. One day in the future true science and religion will come together to establish that God is the author of all creation and Dave's work may be a small link or piece in that puzzle. I'm proud of him. I'm grateful that he is a zoologist. When I saw him as curator of the LSU Museum I thought, "This would be a hard place for me to work." He is fascinated by it, and he is working on the gifts that the Lord has given him.

When Peter Drucker was in the forth grade, Miss Elsa devised a way that Peter was responsible for his own learning. She gave him a notebook, and required him to record what he expected to learn at the beginning of each week, and then to check his expectations against the results at the end of the week. I wish my fourth grade teacher had taught me that principle. I wish we had more Miss. Elsa's. I hope there are some here, so they can help you decide where you are going, not just where someone else thinks you should go. Imagine how your life would change if you were writing out what you expected to achieve each week in your schooling and then you sought after that.

I was with President Hinckley in September of 1997, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He was invited by a religious news correspondent from Houston, who was the chairman of the Religious News Writers of America, to come and speak at their convention. I had the good fortune to accompany him.

What an exciting and scary experience that was. I flew down the night before and met him there. We went to the hotel where the convention was being held. David Briggs, an Associated Press correspondent, had asked for a special interview with the prophet prior to the convention. (I don't think President Hinckley is afraid of anything. Isn't that comforting to know.) He granted that interview. As we sat in interview I watched something happen I wish you all could have seen.

David Briggs started out asking the hard ball kind of questions. He went right at him. And for the first answer, I was on the edge of my seat, because I thought that President Hinckley was tentative, as he was hesitating a little. And I thought, "Could it be, could it be that he is losing some of that edge that he has had as our prophet, is that possible?"

The first question was hard and he was tentative, the next question was harder yet, and then he started to warm up. And each time he'd make a point he would bring his fist down on the table. I watched that hard-nosed Associated Press reporter melt in his hands and ask questions that were so positive you would think that he was programmed by the missionary department.

Then we went into the news conference, the podium was on the same level as the writers, an audience of a hundred and sixty, or eighty people. There was an aisle down the middle and about fifteen feet away was another podium facing the prophet. He delivered his talk, which had been prepared in advance and each writer had received their advanced copy. After the address, he opened it up for questions. What a marvelous time.

One of the reporters said, "I attended the open house for your temple in Saint Louis. In one of the special rooms where you have the opposing mirrors, mirrors that reflect your image into infinity, I think you people say eternity. The president of your Twelve Apostles said the mirrors have to do with your understanding of eternity and how you Mormons are in the center, and some day you will have your own little world. Would you elaborate on that, please?"

I thought, what is he going to do now? I was grateful he was standing there, not I. He said, "Well first of all, speaking of the future, let me say I've not been there before." He has such a way of putting everyone at ease. Now this is the classic 20-second elevator response, He said, "I've never been there, but before we were born we lived in the presence of our Father in Heaven, we had the opportunity to learn and grow to become like him. We come to this life to continue to progress and learn all that we can. When we die it is not a stagnant existence. We continue to learn and grow. It has to do with the eternal progression of man. Does that answer your question?" The reporter said, "I don't know, I guess so," and sat down.

I heard a sportscaster ask the question, "Do you remember where you were when Mark McGuire hit his 62nd home

run?" How many of you remember where you were? Just two or three or four of you. I remember where I was and I will never forget it. Not because of a home run, I was listening to a prophet of God on Larry King live. And so were most of you I hope. If you weren't you should have been. You see Mark McGuire's 62nd home run, breaking Roger Maris's record will be long forgotten for me, but my experience with a prophet of God will never be forgotten.

A little girl in school one day went up to the teacher after class and asked, "Teacher what did I learn today?" She said, "Well I don't know, why do you ask?" The little girl replied, "I've got to know because everyday when I go home my dad asks me what I learned today." I can tell most of you have had that experience. So have I. What did you learn in school today? One of these days we have a Father who will be asking, "What did you learn." And He is expecting us to fill the measure of our creation.

Before becoming a General Authority, I was a farmer and livestock man. A good livestock man always wants a good cattle dog. One that knows how to help him herd cattle, because a good dog can replace three or four cowboys. One day my cousin, from Grace, Idaho, whose father had the finest cattle dog I had ever seen, said, "Trixie's expecting family. Would you like to have one of the puppies" I said, "You know I would." He replied, " Well, I have five promised, if she has more than five, you can have one."

I awaited the day. He finally called and said, "Well, it's a great day. She had six. If they all live you can have one." I waited anxiously. About two months later Dan drove into the yard. It was early in the morning. I was sitting at the breakfast table and I saw his car drive in. I ran out. He opened the trunk and there inside were two border collie puppies. One was black as coal and white as snow. A beautiful little puppy. I pointed to that one and said, "That's mine." He said, "No, this one is yours." He pointed to the other one.

"This one?" He was a mixture of black, brown, white and ugly, but when I picked him up, out of the trunk, I could tell he was a strong puppy. Dan said, "He should be a good one. He has followed his mother more than any of the others." He was a good one. There are a lot of stories that I could tell you about him. The first day, and that was back in the days when you had to have milk cows to have milk for the house. (Some of you don't even know you get milk from cows. You just buy it in the store. But we had to milk the cows.) I took the puppy out with me to milk the cow; sat down on the one legged milk stool and started milking. The puppy laid down behind the cows heels. (Border collies are natural born heelers.) I could tell by the way he was looking he wanted to

bite her on the heels, which made it difficult milking that day but I didn't correct him, for that is what I wanted him to learn to do. I wanted that instinct to develop.

I started to discipline him the first day. We were hauling potatoes out of the potato storage behind the house. I left him at the house and told him to stay. About ten minutes later he was under my feet, so I took him back, disciplined him a little more and told him to stay. About another ten minutes, he was back again. I didn't want him to get run over by one of the big potato trucks so I took him back to the house and this time I made him understand.

Maybe that is the kind of discipline all of us need, to really understand. From that day forward I could send him to the house from any place on the ranch and he would stay until I gave him permission to leave. I thought, wouldn't it be great to have kids like that. Anyway, he learned well. I would take him to the mountains with me, and with hand signals when he was too far away to hear, I could send him around the cattle. He was wonderful, everyone wanted a dog like Stub. (We called him Stub, because of his short tail.) He had the right instincts and they developed beautifully. Every time I would leave the house he would look to see if he had permission to jump in the back of the pickup truck to go with me, and with permission, he went everywhere I went. He was not only a great livestock dog, but a good friend.

I was reading in a live stock magazine about a competition of border collies in Scotland. The winners were worth \$5,000 to \$10,000. I thought, "\$10,000 for a dog? We give them away on the farm." But Stub didn't have a price on him. He was priceless to me. He was not for sale. The other one, the pretty one, he didn't have a price either because he wasn't worth anything. He had the same instincts, but they were directed in the wrong channels. He would lie out in the gutter and try to herd cars as they passed by. With a little discipline and hard work, my dog Stub, "filled the measure of his creation." I wonder how many times we lie in the gutter, and chase cars as they go by instead of filling the measure of our creation by following the celestial instincts the Lord has given each of us.

May the Lord bless you, that you may fill the measure of your creation, that this experience today may help you set in order the things that will be necessary to help you accomplish that. This is Christ's Church, of that I have no doubt or question. As his witness I want you to know that I know he lives, for I know him and love him, and know that through Him any challenge you may have can be overcome if you follow Him.