



'Preparing Today for a Better Tomorrow'

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I am pleased to have the opportunity of being with you again as we attend another devotional at LDS Business College. I bring you greetings from the Board of Trustees who firmly believe the administration, faculty, and student body here are special. We recognize that. You have chosen wisely to come to a place where you can prepare yourself for the future.

I like the theme you have adopted this year of "Preparing Today for a Better Tomorrow." We live in a chaotic world and as we look to the future, preparation is absolutely essential. This is a great time to be young and educated. As a matter of fact, and time is great to be young! But you who are here at LDS Business College are poised on the threshold of a new century, a global society, a knowledge expansion. Technology is advancing so fast that it is impossible to keep up with it. We are in a scientific hey day.

Yet with this rapid change that is occurring in the world, it is sort of like the opening line of Dickens' great work, *A Tale of Two Cities*. "It is the best of times, but it is also the worst of times." We are challenged as never before in our society. Sixty-five percent of America currently believes the country has seriously gotten off on the wrong track. Nearly two-thirds of all the children are now born to single mothers. Children under the age of eight watch television an average of twenty five to thirty hours per week and have forty percent less time with parents than they had just twenty years ago. For every two marriages, there is one divorce. Over the next four years, if our population trends continue, the under eighteen population will experience 600,000 alcoholic deaths, 359,000 deaths from drugs, 338,000 will be killed violently. What has happened in the way we live that is causing so much turmoil? I can guess it is what we could have expected to have happen. In 2 Nephi 2:11 we read:

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so,... righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefor, all things must needs be a com-

pound in one; Wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

The Lord, in his great design for mankind to help prepare them for the eternities to come, instituted a plan whereby there would be opposition. As I have followed the history of mankind, the more he gives to us here on earth, the more opposition there is. We live in this final dispensation of times when the Lord has blessed us with so much. Therefore, we can expect even greater opposition to come our way. Again, this was emphasized in 2 Nephi 2:27:

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

It always amazes me when I read the Book of Mormon how we find account after account of how the Lord revealed his will to his people and yet time and time again, they changed from righteousness to wickedness. There had been a great cleansing before the Savior appeared to the Nephites, and the people were blessed with many years of righteousness living after his appearance. But then once again they started to divide themselves into classes and began to build up churches unto themselves, turning worldly to get gain, and beginning to deny the true Church of Christ. In 4 Nephi 1:27-29 we read:

And it came to pass that when two hundred and ten years had passed away there were many churches in the land; yea, there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness.

And this church did multiply exceedingly because of

iniquity, and because of the power of Satan who did get hold upon their hearts.

And again, there was another church which denied the Christ; and they did persecute the true church of Christ, because of their humility and their belief in Christ; and they did despise them because of the many miracles which were wrought among them.

I was very interested in an address given by Allen Plantiga at the latest BYU Commencement in August. His words helped me to see what happens when we start teaching man-made doctrines which are in opposition to the prophetic words which are received from the Lord. He said:

“This battle is a three-way contest. There are at present three main spiritual responses in the world. Our perspectives on the world are pictures of the world. Three fundamental ways of thinking about what the world we live in is really like, what we ourselves are like, and what we must do to live a good life.”

Then he went on to explain these three contests.

“The first contest he described is what is called naturalism. To understand naturalism, think first of the Christian view of the world, which teaches that there is a god who created the world and all that is contained therein. As Christians, we believe that we are created in the image of God and the most important thing we can do is to get into the right relationship with him. To get the naturalist perspective, you have to erase God from the picture and leave just the world. According to the naturalists there is no god. There is only nature. We human beings are insignificant parts of the great universe that pays no attention to us at all. It is wholly indifferent to our needs, our desires, our hopes, our aspirations, our ideas of wrong and right. And the right way to understand what is more important and distinctive about us--our ability to love, to act, think, use language, or humor, and playacting, or art, philosophy, literature, history, science, or morality, or even our religion--says the naturalism is not in terms of our being images of God because there is no god, but in terms of our similarities to nonhuman nature. We are best seen as parts of nature and are to be understood in terms of our place in the natural world. Naturalism is enormously influential at present. Newspapers, magazines, Sunday supplements, television programs--all of these are regularly full of talk about understanding ourselves from a naturalistic point of view or in terms of our evolutionary origin, not our divine origin. Those who endorse this view often seem to think that the way to find out how we human beings live is to see how other animals manage things.

“Of course, naturalism is completely out of accord with the Christian way of thinking. It threatens the intellectual wholeness and integrity if its Christian community and makes it hard for us to think about ourselves in the world in the Christian way.”

Mr. Plantiga goes on to say:

“The second rival to Christian thinking is what is called relativism. This picture begins with the startling idea that we, as human beings, are somehow responsible for the basic struggles of the world and that the world is the way it is because of what we human beings think and do. Those who believe in relativism apply categories and concepts to the world, and the world in which we live is the way it is because of those categories and conceptions. The easy but fateful step to relativism, as such, is the thought that there simply isn't any such thing as the way the world really is. There is the way it looks to me and the way it looks to you. There is no such thing as truth. Instead, there is my version of reality, the way things are relative to me, and your version of reality, the way things are relative to you. What is true in one version need not be true in another version. So there isn't any such thing as plain truth. There is only truth relative to you and to me and so on. There is no such thing as the way the world is. There are only these different versions, and any one of them is as good as another.

“Relativism is extremely influential and seems to have seeped down into high school and junior high. The whole idea of objective truth is an illusion or silly mistake. Like naturalism, relativism is obviously and deeply inconsistent with the Christian way of thinking.”

These conflicting beliefs being taught today completely remove us from having a concrete set of values--values so necessary for the governance of mankind on earth. Values by their inherent nature embody priorities--priorities that both build and hold or entire civilization together. Many loud and persuasive voices in our society are proclaiming that all differences in ideals, values, and the way we live our lives are equally valid, and that any attempt to prefer one over another is an act of prejudice. Tolerance, not just for other people, but for all ideas and actions, becomes the ultimate virtue.

As we survey the social landscape, it is now abundantly evident that in America the traditional laws of right and wrong, while frequently ignored, have not been repealed. The unfortunate reality, however, is that the inevitable consequence of irresponsible choices is not restrictive to only the individual, but reverberates widely and impacts our children, families, and communities.

As I sort through these conflicting beliefs, how grateful I am for the blessings of the Lord to his children to not leave them alone to struggle through life. In his divine plan, he sent his messengers to earth to teach and instruct us in his law. In our day even at the very time the church was being organized, he declared:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give

unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

“For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.” (D&C 21:1, 4-6)

Thank goodness we have a great scriptural history on which to rely. A history that has proven if we follow the right course we are blessed abundantly from it. When we turn from it, that is when we find the great problems that beset mankind. In the Old Testament we find Israel commemorating celebrations, not simply for pleasure, but for purpose and meaning. Their celebrations were times of remembering and restoration to again bring back balance into their lives. The seventh day of each week was a day of worship and rest. The seventh month of each year was a special time of celebrating and remembering. Every seventh year was consecrated to the Lord. The land was given a time to rest and replenish. The years of seven times seven, or every 50th year was declared to be a year of jubilee--a time of celebration. Balance was again restored by returning the land to the families to which it had belonged in their original settlement, and all bondsmen of the Israelite birth were set free. It was truly a time of remembering and restoration.

Those ideas of remembering and restoration would be a good pattern for us to follow as we cling fast to the great virtues taught to us by those who have worked so hard to establish an understanding of the gospel of our Lord and Savior in our lives.

Of course, we live today in a time of rapid change. The speed at which change occurs had deprived us of the opportunity to stand back and look at where we are really going if we are not careful. We face a multitude of problems which descend on us as rapidly as change itself, and as a result we find ourselves building outside the firmed-up foundation which the Lord has established for his children here on earth. The new structure, in many ways, is not in accordance to the Lord’s building code. Surely it would not stand as a protection for his people as a time of remembering and restoration.

Is it not time to stand back and more carefully analyze the course we are following. What suggestions could I offer to this very talented group that is seated before me today? Perhaps I could refer to one of the greatest leadership lessons taught to mankind by the Lord as he prepared Moses for his most challenging assignment. Imagine the magnitude of the assignment given to Moses. While dates and numbers are difficult to reconcile exactly, the time interval and the size of the congregation he was called to lead was overwhelming. Depending on the period covered, Israel was in bondage in Egypt somewhere between 215 and 440 years. The numbers Moses was called to lead out of Israel has been estimated to be between one million and two million people. There would

have been little strong leadership left in Israel after being slaves for so long.

Let us consider how the Lord prepared Moses for his great assignment. Moses was born in the house of Levi and it was soon evident that he was a goodly child. In order to prevent him from being destroyed in accordance with the order of Pharaoh who was trying to kill the Israelite children to control their population, Moses was hid in the bull rushes where he was found by the daughter of Pharaoh. She had compassion on the young child and took him into her house to be raised. Here he was probably given the best education a young man could receive in a home of this powerful ruler of this great nation. He grew in stature and wisdom and knowledge and leadership ability.

Because of his early training, he knew who he was and who his people were. When he saw them under such burdens, especially when he saw an Egyptian smiting his brother, he could not resist the temptation to defend him. This act of defense caused him to be banished from the land and he had to flee for his life from the face of Pharaoh. He came to the land of Midian where he was introduced in the household of Jethro, a descendant of Abraham, a man of God.

After spending forty years in the household of Pharaoh where he received secular training, Moses’ second period of training was forty years in the household of Jethro where he was taught the spiritual things necessary for his leadership ability. The Lord entrusted his final preparation of this special leader to no man. Therefore, as Moses kept the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, the Lord prepared him and instructed him out of the midst of a burning bush so that he would understand the duties and responsibilities needed to lead the children of Israel out of their captivity.

The Lord’s way of instruction is most interesting to me. He did not give Moses a textbook full of commands or systems to follow. He taught him by example and instructed him in the creation of the world. Moses could then gain an understanding for himself of the leadership principles necessary to enable him to move forward with his tremendous assignment. It is the Lord’s preparation of Moses that I would like to have you consider with me today. In the Book of Moses we read:

“And the earth was without form, and void; and I caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep; and my Spirit moved upon the face of the water; for I am God. And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light.” (Moses 2:2,3)

The first step in preparation is to search for light and the great truths established by our Eternal Father. The story of Lehi and his family in the Book of Mormon illustrates the necessity for light as we build a foundation of truth. As you remember the story of Lehi, his family left their home to journey into the wilderness. Lehi had a dream that his family should not depart into the wilderness until they had the

foundation they needed to direct them on the course they should live and follow. Lehi sent his sons back to the household of Laban to get the record of their genealogy and of their family, and the dealings of the Lord with his people. After two unsuccessful tries, Nephi was able to obtain the record when Laban was delivered into his hands. A great lesson was taught to Nephi as he obtained the record. We cannot leave to chance the obtaining of our foundation of seeking truth. The things of the world will not give us a foundation of the truth we seek, but it is only when we exercise our faith that our search for eternal truth brings satisfaction. Nephi was taught this valuable lesson:

“Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.

“And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise.

“Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.” (1 Nephi 4:13-15)

To prevent ourselves from dwindling and perishing in unbelief, how important it is that we receive the light and inspiration of the foundation which the Lord has established for his children on earth as contained in the Holy Scriptures.

In our search for light, let us remember the source of all truth and to be vigilant in restoring those basic values which seem to find degrees of erosion in our worldly ways.

Second: “And again, I, God, said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and it was so, even as I spake; and I said: Let it divide the waters from the waters; and it was done; And I, God, called the firmament Heaven; and the evening and the morning were the second day.” (Moses 2:6, 8)

During the second creative period, the separation of the heavens from the earth occurred. The Lord used the light that was now visible to enter into an organizational phase.

I was working on a project the other day of trying to determine who among the Church departments should be connected to Internet. As I got into the project, I was astounded at the amount of information that is now flowing to us. We literally have a tidal wave of information that is completely burying us on the computer-generated age. Possibly the best organizational efforts we can use in our personal lives is to attempt to unclutter them. With all the light that it is now possible for us to receive, there must be a way of sorting through and finding out what is useful for us. We must get back to basics. Today we must pick and choose what will be of value to us. A cluttered life is a life you don't have much control of. It is a life in which material and worldly things are allowed to control you. Our lives can become cluttered with so many things. Some are obvious,

such as material things, the stuff we collect. There must be a way in which we can prioritize the material things and sort through them, and yes, even to dispose of those things that are not useful to us. Too much focus in our life in our worldly possessions. We must look at them squarely now and determine what is of value and what is not, and seek after those things that will only give us the real joy and satisfaction we are seeking. Could I encourage you to remember the great heritage which is yours and continually strive to unclutter your lives by restoring balance you need to develop your talents to your best use.

Now third: “And I, God, said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so; and I, God, said: Let there be dry Land; and it was so.

“And I, God, called the day land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters, called I the Sea; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good.

“And the earth brought forth grass, every herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself, after his kind; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good;

“And the evening and the morning were the third day (Moses 2:9,10,12,13).

Thus during the third creative period the Lord recognized the need for a support system to nourish and feed his people while they sojourned in mortality. What a remarkable system he developed. I marvel each time I prepare a seed bed, rototilling carefully to work up the soil, and then with the plumb line, mark a straight line. I walk down the rows with a hoe and a pocket full of corn seed. I strike the first hole and place three small seeds in it. Then I strike the next hole, pull the dirt to cover up the first hole, then three more seeds are placed in the second hole. And so it goes up and down the rows until all the seeds have been used up. Then with watering and weeding, I watch those three seeds literally jump up from the ground, form tall cornstalks higher than my head. Each ear formed and matured yields maybe a hundred times the increase of those three seeds originally planted. What a remarkable system of replenishing he has developed for us. The earth, with proper care and attention, brings forth abundance.

The third creative period reminds us of the need to contribute to the welfare of our Father in Heaven's children as he has contributed to ours.

President Kimball had said: “Service to others deepens and sweetens this life while we are preparing to live in a better world. It is by serving that we learn to serve. When we are engaged in the service of our fellow men, not only do our deeds assist them, but we also put our own problems in a fresher perspective. When we concern ourselves more with others, there is less time to be concerned with ourselves. In the midst of serving, there is the promise of Jesus, that by losing ourselves, we find ourselves.

Is it not time to remember the great contribution of those who have gone before us and restore those pioneer virtues of caring for and serving others of our Father in Heaven's children who need nourishment and replenishment of their needs, both temporal and spiritual.

The fourth period is very interesting. During the creative period the Lord blessed us with a system of recording time. Days were given for periods of activity and rest. Seasons were given for times of planting and harvesting. Seasons grow into years of childhood, youth, adult, and old age. Each with their challenges and opportunities. The challenge is to take time to think--it is the source of power. Time to read--it is the foundation of knowledge. Time to play--it is the secret of perpetual youth. Time to be friendly--it is the road to happiness. Time to laugh--it is the mirror of our soul. A time to give--it is ungodly to be selfish. Time to work--it is the price of success. A time to love and be loved--it is God's given privilege. A time to pray--it is the greatest power on earth. Take time. It is yours. (*Especially for Mormons*, page 365).

We have all been blessed with the same amount of time each day. How we use it is what will benefit us in mortality and in the eternities to come. Each day must be planned and nurtured for the best use possible. And if we use it wisely, it will be multiplied for us so that we will have the benefit of ever increasing the time we have to use to develop our talents, our abilities, for our joy, for our recreation, for our spiritual

refreshment and understanding of the laws of the Lord.

The instructions of the Lord to Moses certainly define a system to bring about balance in our lives. You will note that each of these steps was accomplished before the beginning of any of the creative periods of animals life. The Lord's instructions to Moses, as we apply them our lives, would be to first seek for light, the eternal truths, the foundation of all learning. Second, organize that light to give balance to our lives. Third, use our time and our talents in worthwhile service for the benefit of others of our Father in Heaven's children. Finally, in the use of our time, be certain that we put our priorities in order. Use our time wisely for understanding the things the Lord has blessed us with and developing of our talents and our abilities for the opportunities that are ahead of us in this glorious world in which we live.

Yes, the gospel of our Lord and Savior has given us so much to love for. It gives us hope for the future. It defines for us values that, if followed, will bless our lives even in the eternities to come. It gives us direction in which we can plan our lives.

God grant that this will be a time of remembering the special blessings we have received and a time of being thankful for those eternal truths which will give us the greatest fulfillment and happiness as we progress through our mortal experience.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.