



Pres. Spencer W. Kimball
(1895-1985)

Excerpts from “Education For Eternity” by Elder Spencer W. Kimball

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... There are many criteria by which a university can be judged and appraised and evaluated. The special qualities of Brigham Young University lie not in its bigness; there are a number of much larger universities. It should not be judged by its affluence and the amount of money available for buildings, research and other facilities. It should not be judged by prestige, for there are more status-full institutions as the world measures status.

The uniqueness of Brigham Young University lies in its special role—education for eternity—which it must carry in addition to the usual tasks of a university. This means concern—curricular and behavioral—for not only the “whole man” but for the “eternal man.” Where all universities seek to preserve the heritage of knowledge that history has washed to their feet, this faculty has a double heritage—the preserving of knowledge of men and the revealed truths sent from heaven. While all universities seek to push back the frontiers of knowledge further and further, this faculty must do that and also keep new knowledge in perspective, so that the avalanche of facts does not carry away saving, exalting truths from the value systems of our youth.

In addition, this faculty must aid the youth of the kingdom in establishing yet another educational expectation—that there are yet “many great and important things” to be revealed which require an intellectual and spiritual posture of readiness and openness. Where other institutions of higher education aim, in part, at educating and training students for various careers, this faculty must do that vital job and do it superbly well, but it must do far more. It must train a cadre of committed, educated youth who can serve effectively, not only in the world of work but in the growing kingdom of God in which skilled leadership is such a vital commodity.

This time of intellectual testing must also be a time of equivalent testing and flexing in things spiritual too. “The spirit giveth life” is so true in so many ways. When there is an inner-emptiness in the life of man, his surroundings, however affluent, cannot compensate. When there is a crisis of purpose, nothing will really seem worthwhile or meaningful. When man’s relationship with God has been breached, we will be as Isaiah said, “restless as the ‘sea which cannot rest.’”

A university or an individual can have all the surface signs of security and yet still be empty inside. You must fill the classrooms and halls of this campus with facts, but fill them also with the spirit of the Master Teacher who said to the Nephites of the things He had done: “Even so shall ye do unto the world.” ...

How the world needs a light in the dark, even a refuge—a vault for keeping the jewels and treasures of life, a big wastebasket into which could be dumped the trash and filth and destructive ideologies and eccentric activities. While great universities and colleges seem to have abandoned all attempts to influence the moral lives of their students, this University must “hold the line.” Apparently such an attitude seems to be growing on the campuses of our nation, and what can we expect of the graduates tomorrow?

There are holes in the fabric of our political system; our social world continues to show corruption. A climate is coming into being which seems to not only permit crimes against society but to actually encourage them indirectly. “Do We Have a Sick Society?” the *U.S. News and World Report* asks in a recent issue.

In the current issue of *The Instructor*, President David O. McKay, after speaking of our carelessness in keeping our bodies fit and calling attention to the physical decay, reminds us that spiritual decay is more serious. He says:

But great as is the peril of physical decay, greater is the peril of spiritual decay. The peril of this century is spiritual apathy. As the body requires sunlight, good food, proper exercise and rest, so the spirit of man requires the sunlight of the Holy Spirit, proper exercise of the spiritual functions, the avoiding of evils that affect spiritual health that are more ravaging in their effects than the dire diseases that attack the body. ...

Never before have the forces of evil been arrayed in such deadly formation as they are now. ... Satan and his forces are attacking the high ideals and sacred standards which protect our spirituality. One cannot help but be alarmed by the ever-increasing crime wave ... (David O. McKay, *The Instructor*, September, 1967, p. 338.)

In our sick society children are not required to work; time hangs heavily on their hands. Their crimes run into theft and beatings, and even murders fill more of their time. Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C., East Village in New York City may be net results of some of the laxities and looseness in morals with increases in illegitimacy. And numerous evils of our times may look to the deteriorating, ethical standards proposed often by professors in what are termed great universities. God's ways and eternal standards are laughed at and "situation ethics," making each person his own moral judge and authority, all seem to be responsible for the sickness of our society. How can it survive?

When these numerous other things are weighed and considered, we come to realize our responsibility at BYU becomes greater and greater. We must carry the torch and light the way, and this faculty and staff must stand like a concrete wall to prevent these strange, worldly ideologies and concepts from invading this, one of the last bastions of resisting strength.

We should be knowledgeable. When we talk of godhood and creatorship and eternal increase, we have already soared far out beyond the comprehension of most men. To attain those great accomplishments, one would need to know all about astronomy, biology, physiology, psychology, and all of the arts and sciences. The obtaining of all this knowledge will come largely after our earth life. The question is often asked, "Why a doctrine-teaching, a character-building university?" "Why not let men do, think, and move as they please?"

Milliken said, "... that science has gone ahead so fast, man can spend fifty to a hundred years just learning how to use wisely what he already knows." It is stated further that the western world has in the past hundred years seen more changes in the external conditions under which the average man lives, and also his fundamental conceptions, than occurred during all the preceding four thousand years.

Our Brigham Young insisted:

Learn everything that the children of men know, and be prepared for the most refined society upon the face of the earth.

Then improve on this until we are prepared and permitted to enter the society of the blessed—the holy angels, that dwell in the presence of God. ...

The Lord seems never to have placed a premium on ignorance and yet He has, in many cases, found His better-trained people unresponsive to the spiritual, and has had to use spiritual giants with less training to carry on His work. Peter was said to be ignorant and unlearned, while Nicodemus was, as the Savior said, a master, a trained one, an educated man. And while Nicodemus would in his aging process gradually lose his prestige, his strength, and go to the grave a man of letters without eternal knowledge, Peter would go to his reputed crucifixion the greatest man in all the world, perhaps still lacking considerably in secular knowledge (which he would later acquire), but being pre-eminent in the greater, more important knowledge of the eternities and God and His creations and their destinies. And Paul gives us the key:

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:44)

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

It is interesting to note that most of us have a tendency to want to ape the ways of our neighbor, in styles or curricula or universities. If New York or Paris speaks, the dresses are lengthened or shortened; if San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury speaks, men's hair grows longer, beards appear and baths are less frequent. If the Joneses have a Cadillac, all want Cadillacs. If a nation has a king, all want a king. We seem reluctant to establish our own standards, make our own styles, follow our own patterns which are based on dignity, comfort and propriety.

Israel did want a king. “Now make us a king,” they cried to Samuel, “to judge us like all the nations.” And when Samuel prayed, the Lord said, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” And then with the inspiration of the Lord, Samuel pointed out to them the hazards of having a king. The king would recruit their sons in battle. Their daughters would serve in confectionaries and kitchens and bakeries. Their sons would have to work his ground and reap his harvests, and make his spears and swords and rebuild his chariots and train his horses. He would appropriate their vineyards and olive yards to feed his servants, and he would tax them heavily.

In spite of all these dire predictions, the people still said, “Nay; but we will have a king over us ... like other nations.”

Though our world reels and trembles, we must stand firm and see that behavior troubles do not invade our campus like other campuses, and that we are not like other universities.

We have been speaking of mind and spirit and body; of the immortal man and the mortal man. We have been speaking of earthly things and spiritual things; of time and eternity. Of the two; the spiritual development is the greater for it is permanent, lasting, and incorporates all other proper secular development.

The Lord inspired Nephi to correlate the secular and the spiritual, when he said, “... to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.” (2 Nephi 9:29)

Someone has said, “... if the world needs a bomb to destroy the cities and its peoples and the world, the laboratory of the American university can supply it.” And we say, “If the world needs messengers of peace and teachers of righteousness and builders of character and inspirers of faith in God, here is the university that can do all this—here at the Brigham Young University.”

Even here we give to the first cause our lesser attention and though we are far in front of other institutions, still we give less time, less thought, less effort to the actual teaching of the spiritual as contrasted with the secular. But perhaps this imbalance of time and energy and effort is considerably compensated for if all of you instructors in all classes teach the gospel, especially by example. Most of you teach eloquently in this manner. Most of you will be frequent attenders at the temple, will serve in the stakes and wards, priesthood and auxiliary organizations. Some of you will be leaders in general church positions. All of you will be living all the commandments of the Lord—paying a full tithing, observing the Word of Wisdom, not because it is expected, but because it is right. ...

It would not be expected that all of the faculty should be categorically teaching religion constantly in their classes, but it proper that every professor and teacher in this institution would keep his subject matter bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel, and have all his subject matter perfumed lightly with the spirit of the gospel. Always, there would be an essence and the student would feel the presence.

Every instructor should grasp the opportunity occasionally to bear formal testimony of the truth. Every student is entitled to know the attitude and feeling and spirit of his every teacher. Certainly, a science instructor or a physical education teacher or a math or art teacher could find an opportunity sometimes to mention spiritual experiences or comment on the gospel truths. This would be in harmony with the spirit of Brigham Young’s charge to Karl G. Maeser, so often quoted:

President Young looked steadily forward for a few minutes as though in deep thought, then said, “Brother Maeser, I want you to remember that you ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the spirit of God. That is all. God bless you. Goodbye.”

That statement has been used over and over but we must never forget it. If we begin to ape the world and forget this injunction, we are lost. We pay our taxes; we support state schools; therefore, there is no justification whatever for our spending these millions of dollars on this institution unless we mind the purposeful objective given by the prophet. ...

In our world, there have risen brilliant stars in drama, music, literature, sculpture, painting, science and all the graces. For long years I have had a vision of the BYU greatly increasing its already strong position of excellence till the eyes of all the world will be upon us.

President John Taylor so prophesied, as he emphasized his words with this directive:

You mark my words, and write them down and see if they do not come to pass.

You will see the day that Zion will be far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind as we are today in regard to religious matters

God expects Zion to become the praise and glory of the whole earth, so that kings hearing of her fame will come and gaze upon her glory ... (Sermon, September 20, 1857; see *The Messenger*, July 1953)

With regard to masters, surely there must be many Wagners (Richard Wagner, 1813-1883) in the BYU, approaching him or yet to come in the tomorrows—young people with love of art, talent supreme, and eagerness to create. I hope we at BYU may produce men greater than this German composer, Wagner, but less eccentric, more spiritual.

Who of us has not sat spellbound with *Aida*, *Il Trovatore* or other of the masterpieces of Verdi (1813-1900)? Can there never be another Verdi or his superiors? Could we not find and develop a Bach (1685-1750) to whom music, especially organ and choral music, owes almost as much as a religion does to its founder, say some musicians.

Is there anyone here who has not been stirred by the rich melodic voice of Enrico Caruso (1873-1921), Italian-born operatic tenor? Surely, there have been few-voices which have inspired so many. Considered to be the greatest voice of his century by many, year after year, he was the chief attraction at the Metropolitan Opera. Would someone say that they produce singers best in Italy, in Germany, in Poland or Sweden? Remember we draw our students from all these places. BYU should attract many and stir their blood with the messages of the ages. And they will sing songs of accomplishment, eternal marriage, exaltation, and we at BYU shall encourage and train them. ...

Brigham Young said, "... Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all sciences and art belong to the Saints ..."

One great artist was asked which of all his productions was the greatest. His prompt answer was, "The next."

If we strive for perfection, the best and greatest, and are never satisfied with mediocrity, we can excel. In the field of both composition and performance, why cannot the students from here write a greater oratorio than Handel's *Messiah*? The best has not yet been composed nor produced. They can use the coming of Christ to the Nephites as the material for a greater masterpiece. Our BYU artists tomorrow may write and sing of Christ's spectacular return to the American earth in power and great glory, and his establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth our own dispensation. No Handel (1685-1759) nor other composer of the past or present or future could ever do justice to this great event. How could one ever portray in words and music the glories of the coming of the Father and the Son and the restoration of the doctrines and the priesthood and the keys unless he were an inspired Latter-day Saint, schooled in the history and doctrines and revelations and with rich musical ability and background and training? Why cannot the BYU bring forth this producer?

George Bernard Shaw, the Irish dramatist and critic (1856-1950), summed up an approach to life: "Other peoples," he said, "see things and say, 'WHY?' But I dream things that never were—and I say 'WHY NOT?'" We need people here who can dream of things that never were, and ask "WHY NOT?"

Dom Jae gave us this:

Blessed is the man with new worlds to conquer. For him the future beams with promise. He never attains ultimate success, is never satisfied, is ever on the way to better things. Ahead of him there is always another dream castle glittering in the sun—and what fun it is to build foundations under it!

Freed largely from expansion and growing pains, we can now pour many firm foundations under our dreams for the future. ...

But then we ask, “Can there never be another Michelangelo?” Ah! Yes! His “David” in Florence, and his “Moses” in Rome inspire to adulation. Did all such talent run out in that early century? Could not we find an embodied talent like this, but with a soul that was free from immorality and sensuality and intolerance?

Could there be among us embryo poets and novelists like Goethe? (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832.) Have we explored as much as we should? Of the creator of *Faust*, Emerson said, “The old eternal genius that built the world had confided itself more to this man than to any other.” But Goethe was not the greatest nor the last. There may be many Goethes among us even today, waiting to be discovered. Inspired students will write great books and novels and biographies and plays.

Can we not find equal talent to those who gave us *A Man for All Seasons*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Ben Hur*? This latter book I read when a small boy and many times I have returned to it; Critics might not agree with me, but I feel that it is a great story. *My Fair Lady* and *The Sound of Music* and such have pleased their millions, but I believe we can improve on them.

We have the great Rembrandt (1606-1669) whose style is original, rounded on the work of no other artist, whose coloring is somber and reaches its highest achievement in combinations of browns and grays. There are few paintings about which so much has been written as Rembrandt’s “The Night Watch,” or his self-portraits. His morals also have been subject to criticism.

And we have the Italian painter, Raphael (1483-1520), generally accepted in the European world as the greatest of religious painters.

It has been said that many of the great artists were perverts or moral degenerates. In spite of their immorality, they became great and celebrated artists. What could be the result if discovery were made of equal talent in men who were clean and free from the vices, and thus entitled to revelations?

We have scientists who can help harness the limitless powers and turn them to good for all humanity. There have been Pasteur (1822-1895) and Curie (1867-1934) and Albert Einstein (1879-1955), and there are the Harvey Fletchers, the Henry Eyrings and there will be greater yet.

Then there is Shakespeare (1564-1616). Everybody quotes Shakespeare. The English poet and dramatist was prodigious in his productions. His Hamlet and Othello and King Lear and Macbeth are only prelude to the great mass of his productions. Has anyone other ever been so versatile, so talented, so remarkable in his art? And yet, could the world produce only one Shakespeare?

The Lamanite-Nephite culture means much to the people of the Church, and properly so. Here at BYU, should we not have the greatest collection of artifacts, records, writings, concerning them in the world? Through revelation, we have received much knowledge concerning these peoples. Should not BYU then be prominent in this field of culture?

Perhaps growing up in a backwoods forest in Indiana or Louisiana or in Oregon or Illinois, there may be some little deprived boy doing his elementary math on a wood fire-shovel and borrowing books from neighbors and splitting rails, who will find his way tomorrow to the BYU, and here in the proper departments, get the background, knowledge, and inspiration which will send him skyrocketing to fame and honors, perhaps even to the White House, and a man to be ever after heralded for his wisdom, bravery, conscience, humanity, leadership, and to be quoted till eternity. His name might be Abraham, his mother’s name might be Nancy, and could this be written concerning him as was written of his 19th century counterpart?

*Oh, well, send the women,
Send them there to Nance;
Poor little young un'
Born without a chance.*

The little Abes could have their chances and their greatest talents improved and perfected, and their notoriety spring from humble but influential BYU.

Oh, how our world needs statesmen! And we ask again with George Bernard Shaw, "Why not?" We have the raw material, we have the facilities, we can excel in training. We have the spiritual climate. We must train statesmen, not demagogues; men of integrity, not weaklings who for a mess of pottage will sell their birthright. We must develop these precious youth to know the art of statesmanship, to know people and conditions, to know situations and problems, but men who will be trained so thoroughly in the arts of their future work and in the basic honesties and integrities and spiritual concepts that there will be no compromise of principle.

For years I have been waiting for someone to do justice in recording in song and story and painting and sculpture the story of the restoration, the re-establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, the struggles and frustrations; the apostasies and inner revolutions and counter revolutions of those first decades; of the exodus; of the counter reactions; of the transitions; of the persecution days; of the plural marriage and the underground; of the miracle man, Joseph Smith, of whom we sing "Oh, what rapture filled his bosom, for he saw the living God! "; and of the giant colonizer and builder, Brigham Young, by whom this University was organized and for whom it was named.

The story of Mormonism has never yet been written nor painted nor sculptured nor spoken. It remains for inspired hearts and talented fingers yet to reveal themselves. They must be faithful, inspired, active Church members to give life and feeling and true perspective to a subject so worthy. Such masterpieces should run for months in every movie center, cover every part of the globe in the tongue of the people, written by great artists, purified by the best critics.

Our writers, our moving picture specialists, with the inspiration of heaven, should tomorrow be able to produce a masterpiece which would live forever. Our own talent, obsessed with dynamism from a CAUSE, could put into such a story life and heartbeats and emotions and love and pathos, drama, suffering, love, fear, courage, and the great leader, the mighty modern Moses who led a people farther than from Egypt to Jericho, who knew miracles as great as the stream from the rock at Horeb, manna in the desert, giant grapes, rain when needed, battles won against great odds. And the great miracle prophet, the founder of this University, would never die.

Take a Nicodemus and put Joseph Smith's spirit in him and what do you have? Take a da Vinci or a Michelangelo or a Shakespeare and give him a total knowledge of the plan of salvation of God and personal revelation and cleanse him, and then take a look at the statues he will carve, and the murals he will paint, and the masterpieces he will produce. Take a Handel with his purposeful effort, his superb talent, his earnest desire to properly depict the story, and give him inward vision of the whole true story and revelation and what a master you have!

What a great University the BYU now is! A much greater one it can yet become! One of the rich rewards coming from doing great things is the capacity to do still greater things.

The architect Daniel H. Burnham said:

*Make no little plans; they have no magic (there)
to stir men's blood
And probably themselves will not be realized.
Make big plans; aim high and hope and work,
Remembering that a noble, logical diagram once
recorded will never die,
But long after we are gone,
Will be a living thing,
Asserting itself with ever-growing insistency.
Remember that our sons and grandsons are going*

*to do things
That would stagger us.
Let your watchword be order and your beacon
beauty.*

The BYU must keep its vessel seaworthy. It must take out all old planks as they decay and put in new and stronger timber in their place. It must sail on and on and on.

And now may we suggest to you as did the commanding officer on the sands of Dunkirk when 300,000 troops were hemmed in by enemy tanks and they had to be gotten off the beach. Hundreds of men with motor boats and dinghies rushed to help. There were no charts—no time for pep talks nor pampering. They were told: “Now off you go and good luck to you—steer for the sound of the guns. No time for loitering. We must be engaged with it.”

May God bless this great University and you and us, and its impressive student body, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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