

I am grateful to have the opportunity to spend just a few minutes to address you today. I will direct my remarks to you who are graduating. The only challenge that presents is that you are behind me! I would much prefer to look in your eyes and to see and feel the power and goodness of your hearts and minds.

BYU has a wonderful document called “The Aims of a BYU Education.” It outlines four, broad purposes that define and direct learning and teaching at BYU, which are that education should be

Spiritually strengthening
Intellectually enlarging
Character building, and
Lead to lifelong learning and service.

Today I would like to say a few words related to the third aim of building character. It states that BYU seeks to educate students who are renowned for *what they are* as well as for *what they know*.

Yesterday Elder Richard G. Scott gave a marvelous commencement address in which he praised you for not only having achieved the requirements of your academic programs but for having met the highest standards of personal integrity and worthiness. He said words similar to these he taught in a recent general conference:

God uses your faith to mold your character. Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming. Strong moral character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Your faith can guide you to those correct choices. Clearly, it is what you do and what you think about that determine what you are and what you will become. ...

Elder Scott continues:

Faith will forge strength of character available to you in times of urgent need. Such character is not developed in moments of great challenge or temptation. That is when it is used. Character is woven patiently from threads of principle, doctrine, and obedience. ... Righteous character is what you are becoming. It is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. ... Righteous character provides the foundation of spiritual strength. It enables you in times of trial and testing to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly even when they seem overpowering.¹

¹ Richard G. Scott, “The Sustaining Power of Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Testing,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 75

Do you see the pattern he describes? Faith requires you to make choices. Making consistently correct choices, often in periods of trial and testing, develops your character. Character and faith will give you spiritual power.

Now, let's return again to the Aims of a BYU Education. "President David O. McKay taught that character is the highest aim of education..." "Consequently, a BYU education should bring together the intellectual integrity of fine academic discipline with the spiritual integrity of personal righteousness. The result," and we see and expect this in you graduates, "is competence that reflects the highest professional and academic standards strengthened and ennobled by Christ like attributes."

Thus understood, the development of character is so important that BYU has no justification for its existence unless it builds character...

it fulfills its promise when the morality of the graduates of this University provide[s] the music of hope for the inhabitants of this planet.

You go now on to the next phase of your important lives, using the power of the arts and the media to communicate the truths and beauties of your individual disciplines informed by the values of the gospel. Always remember the sacrifice of the tithe payers who have made it possible for you to learn here in this special environment. Dedicate yourselves to give back to the Church, your families, the world, and the Lord the increase of your talents made possible through your BYU education. Begin now to donate your means, even in small amounts, to enable other students to come here and learn.

You will be watched throughout the rest of your lives to see if your character is aligned with that for which BYU stands. Please, please stay worthy of that sacred trust. Sometime today, perhaps as you kneel to pray this evening, ask the Lord to help you make good choices as you apply and increase the learning you have acquired here. Ask that you might play and sing the music of hope to the entire planet through the instruments of your gifts amplified by your righteous character. As your faculty and leaders, we pray the Lord will bless each of you on life's journey, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.