

May Our Lives Reflect His Will

We are here to celebrate the singular accomplishment of those who have completed the rigorous requirements of their chosen degree. They are the focus of our attention. We appreciate and admire their diligence and tenacity and rightfully expect much of them in the future. Most are leaving to pursue new challenges and opportunities. A few will pursue an advanced degree at BYU. All are marking a time of change and choice in their lives.

Each of us came to this phase of our eternal existence with nothing but what we were. When we complete this experience we will leave with nothing but what we are. In between the point of arrival and the point of departure we will become who we want to be. And during the process of becoming, we will benefit from both the helps and the hindrances provided by others. In return, each of us will have life-long opportunities to help or hinder them. We are free to choose the path we will pursue and the way we will treat others along the way.

As each of us travels life's path to becoming we will be who we are, and who we are will make a difference. We may choose to love and serve others, lifting their burdens and adding to their happiness, or we may choose to advance our own desires at the expense of others.

We are the offspring of an Eternal Father who loves His children above all else. "For behold," He informed Moses, "this is my work and my glory – to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39) He is focused on serving us and promoting our eternal welfare. How fitting it would be if our focus were to be on serving Him and promoting His eternal purposes. After all, if it is God's way to focus on our welfare, why not make it our way to focus on His purposes? What if His way, instead, was focused on eternally seeking His own wealth, power, and recognition with little or no concern for the good of His children? What if He used us, abused us, and then disposed of us? Would there be any joy?

Fortunately, as Lehi taught his family, "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that **they** might have joy." (2 Nephi 2:25, emphasis added) Joy is a central object of our existence. But notice Lehi said that mankind "might" have joy, not "will" have joy. The choice is ours. Joy comes at a price; that price being obedience to the principles that lead to joy. We are free to choose the peaceful path to joy and liberation, or the turbulent path to sorrow and captivity.

During a particularly trying time in his life, while the prophet Nephi was “pondering upon the things which the Lord had shown unto him, . . . a voice came unto him saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast . . . not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.” (Helaman 10:2-4) The Lord went on to honor Nephi with extraordinary spiritual power for choosing a path that favored seeking the Lord’s will above seeking his own life.

About five years after joining the BYU faculty I was assigned to create a song for a Sunday night fireside in conjunction with the Mormon Festival of Arts. It was to be sung by the entire congregation at a certain point in the program. The song expressed a desire that our lives reflect the Lord’s will:

“When temptations of the world seem to beckon me; when with darkness crowding in I am slow to see; I plead for light and strength from Thee, to reach my goal, and help me keep the promises made long ago. O Savior, may my life reflect Thy will. May my life be used in serving Thee. Let Thy light be a constant guiding star to lead me, ever lead me to Thee.” (*May My Life Reflect Thy Will*, K. Newell Dayley, Sonos Music, 1973)

You can imagine the impact of hearing those words sung by a congregation that nearly filled the Marriott Center to capacity. My hope then, and throughout the intervening years, has been that all who depart from this institution after an exhilarating season of learning will have chosen to seek the will of the Lord in all things, so that they might be empowered to “keep the promises made long ago,” before this phase of existence. Those promises most likely had much to do with the ways we ought to serve each another and, by so doing, reflect the will of God.

As I look back over the years I was privileged to serve at BYU, all that really seems to matter is the service rendered to its students, staff, faculty, and other important stakeholders. Any efforts to seek my own life are of little concern. Perhaps this is because that which is accomplished through service to others continues in and through them, while efforts spent on ourselves are soon forgotten.

In his message published in the March 2008 issue of the Ensign, President Gordon B. Hinckley soberly testified that “we know not what’s ahead but we know that Christ is there.” Knowing Christ is in our future, we ought to adopt Nephi’s way, because it is Christ’s way, and the only way to eternal

joy. Let's not make the mistake of seeking our own lives and the pride of the world. Let's seek the will of God, and seek to keep His commandments. This is the promised pathway to peace and happiness now, and eternal joy in a time to come.

Let's allow ourselves to be overcome with light and truth so that we will receive the strength and wisdom required to overcome the world. If we center our lives and our work in Christ and truly "come unto Him" we will surely be empowered to make a difference in the world through the service we extend to others.

May our lives reflect the will of God, our Eternal Father, and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, through the quiet assurance and guidance of the Holy Ghost who, we have been promised, "will show unto [us] all things what [we] should do." (2 Nephi 32:5)

The honor that has been afforded me this day, and by extension to my wife, Diane, and our supportive family, is deeply appreciated. But I must hasten to point out that this honor is not about me. It is about service. It is about the students, staff, and faculty of this institution, whom I have come to love as we have served together over the years, united in an imperfect search for the ways and the will of God.

K. Newell Dayley

College of Fine Arts and Communications

Graduation Convocation

April 25, 2008