

Sara Lee Gibb

Fine Arts Convocation Address

College of Fine Arts and Communications

20 April, 2012

Sara Lee Gibb is a retired dance professor and former dean of the now discontinued College of Health and Human Performance.

During the days of graduation celebration, you have been exposed to some wonderful council. Have you ever wondered why, whenever there is a celebration, that part of the ceremony is listening to speeches? Partly in my own defense for standing before you with yet another speech, let me share some understanding that Alma gives us as to why we give speeches. He said, “And now as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them” (Alma 31:5).

My hope is that you will remember what you have heard and live and act accordingly. “Remember” is a good word and is used and needed in all parts of life, now and in the future. The definition of a very bright person is his or her ability to remember.

Over the course of your life—and more particularly and recently your BYU experience—your quest has likely been the search for truth. You have been taught: You have learned many things that will go with you for your lifetime. Other things I guarantee you will forget. But your habits of seeking, searching, and learning should continue with you

forever. In some ways you have received a double education at BYU. President Kimball said it best when he said that BYU could provide an “education for eternity.”

Much of our current knowledge will evolve, grow, and change, but the spiritual truths will not change. In a few short years, what we think of as cutting edge will be considered rudimentary.

Our Father in Heaven has revealed ultimate truths to us. A part of your study here has consisted of those truths that will not change. You have an anchor to hold you secure. Your education has provided you with knowledge and guideposts not only for this life but beyond this life—if you will not be distracted by worldly enticements.

So what have you learned that matters most? All knowledge to be gained in this life is important. Every field of study is provided for our benefit and edification.

However, the fields of study in this college seem to have a particular importance. We understand the fusion of intellectual and artistic effort that produces outstanding work. We understand the vast effort in nurturing that is required to create art in concept and in production and to build the educational and scholarly work of the fields—the strength of the dance, with its complete human commitment; the transcendent command of music; the life-changing experiences of theatre; the visual presentations of feelings, things and ideas; the magnificent capacity of all of the various media to communicate, to influence, to inspire—and the attendant study surrounding these disciplines is incredibly powerful.

These are mediums of power and persuasion in the skilled hands of those who know how to use them. How will you use your knowledge, your highly developed skills? The

adversary is also trying to commandeer these powerful tools for his purposes. All of the advances in our disciplines can be used for good or for evil. He tries to get us involved in vain and foolish things.

To receive the blessings of eternity, we must be earnest about spiritual things. As you come to understand who and Whose you really are and as you hold fast to the iron rod as seen in Lehi's vision, you will surely feel the love of God and have a sense of your personal worth to Him. With true faith in Christ, you can reject any offer that would have you use your precious gifts and talents for any purposes other than the Lord's purposes—since He gave you those gifts in the first place.

The great and spacious building that was seen in Lehi's dream is the praise of the world, and it will fall (see 1 Nephi 11:36). It will be full of those who love to point a mocking finger and ridicule one who walks the higher road. But the Lord has made sacred promises to his covenant people. He will change the conditions as necessary for His work to move forward. And what may seem like an opportunity lost in terms of the world will, in the end, be a greater opportunity gained, if we follow the promptings of the spirit.

Faith and fear cannot coexist. Fear manifests doubt; faith results in assurance. Fear leads to panic, and bad decisions; faith leads to peace and inner security. Take your time. Have faith in your ability. "Flowers do not force their way with great strife. They open to perfection slowly in the sun" (attributed to White Eagle). Our Lord and Master is in complete control and his repeated pleas in scripture are for us to "fear not" the ways of the Lord (see, for instance, Isa. 54:4, 2 Tim. 1:7, D&C 6:36, etc.).

If this educational experience has helped you gain intelligence, light, and knowledge, “or in other words, light and truth,” (D&C 92:26) you will have gained an education for eternity. You will recognize the importance of the Savior’s love for you personally, that the Atonement can be active everyday of your life. You will know how important it is to draw upon the powers of heaven through prayer and that your Heavenly Father is just as close as you will allow Him to be. You will do more and be more with Him as a partner than you can ever do or be on your own (see Ether 12:27-28).

With this education, you are prepared to serve in ways that you may not even know at this time. In many ways you hold a powerful destiny in your hands.

By your own soul, learn to live,
And if men thwart you take no heed.
If men hate you have no care.
Paint your world, dance your dance,
Sing your song, dream your dream,
Hope your hope, and pray your prayer.

(Based on Pakenham Beatty, “To Thine Own Self Be True”)

You may find yourself on the world stage with the unbelievable potential to use your talents, knowledge, and gifts to change the world—or your service may be on a small and quiet scale. But “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). Whether in your profession, and more importantly in your homes, close or far away, you will have the opportunity to impact the world.

Take this responsibility seriously. What if Anna Pavlova had chosen to be a burlesque queen? Or if Michelangelo had chosen to make more money as a graffiti artist for the Roman games? The world would have lost irreplaceable treasures that lift and edify. But these artists, along with countless others, felt a higher purpose and recognized from where their talents came. Make your life an affirmation defined by your ideals, not the negation of others’.

Never before has the admonition “enter to learn and go forth to serve” been more important. “Going forth” may be in places you have not even heard of, perhaps remote areas of the world, or such venues as the animation of games, not even a factor a few years ago. What will be the message there? What influence will you have as you leave to go into the world?

The Savior pleads, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto” (D&C 88:63). If you know this and draw close to your Heavenly Father, your education in its entirety will be focused and used for the good of all you may influence throughout your life. You will have discovered what really matters most. Your professional contributions, and most importantly, your family, and even the world will benefit from this light and knowledge. It will be this faith and testimony that will allow you to receive the promptings of the spirit to guide you as you go forth to serve and fulfill all that you will be capable of in your life. And what is more, you will be happy. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said it this way: “If you have not chosen the kingdom of God first, it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead” (quoting William Law).

Here are some things that I challenge you to remember:

Always remember the absolute truths and let them be your guide before worldly concepts. I testify that they are true. For instance, there is a God. Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. His Atonement makes everything possible for you if you will live close to the spirit and be obedient to His commandments. The gospel has been restored in these latter days to bless each of us and our families. There are prophets, seers, and revelators on the earth today through whom the Lord administers his kingdom. The Savior will come back! Let these truths guide your choices, behavior, and goals.

Remember your spiritual experiences that can create in you a deep and abiding testimony of these absolute truths. Remember to go about doing good as did the Savior.

Remember the sacred covenants you have made or will yet make. Remember the promised joy and eternal blessings that await those who make and keep eternal covenants.

Remember to seek the Holy Spirit in all of your future plans and ask in sincerity how the Lord would have you proceed.

Remember. And let your remembrance guide you to success and true peace and happiness. I close with an admonition from President Thomas S. Monson: “Let us resolve here and now to follow that straight path which leads home to the Father of us all.” We love you. May God bless you all, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.