



By Elder
Robert C. Gay
Of the Seventy

PUT THE Savior First

At the time of my graduation from Harvard, I was in the office of my thesis adviser. He was a kind, devout Christian.

We had never spoken about religion, but that afternoon he said, “Bob, I want you to stay and teach here at the business school, but I don’t want you to stay for the reasons you may think. I don’t want you here because I believe you’ll make some great contribution to the literature. You’re smart but not that kind of smart.”

I said something like, “OK.”

He then said, “Bob, I want you to stay and teach here because I want you to teach our students about God. That is what I do every day during my office hours. I need someone to help me teach them about life.”

I was stunned. My vision of my degree changed. I knew then that no matter what else I might do with my schooling—whether it was teaching, going into business, or supporting a family—I needed to apply it in a way that added light to others and not to myself.

Interestingly, about nine years ago I had a similar experience. I had just returned home from serving as a mission president and began seeking advice from others as to what to do next. At that time, I received a note from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. That note read in part: “What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors.

. . . Wise are those who make this commitment: I will put the Lord first in my life, and I will keep His commandments. . . . This is the ultimate significance of taking upon you the name of Jesus Christ, and this is what we should ponder.”¹

May you resolve to live as a witness for Jesus Christ by letting your light “shine before men.”





Embrace the marginalized of this world, or as the Savior said, the lost, the last, and the least.

Yours too is a choice of how best to apply your degree and talents. You can use your training either to bring light to yourself or to bring the Savior's light to others.

How to do this should be deeply pondered. To that end, I would like to commend two fundamental principles for your consideration.

The first principle is that you hear and follow the Spirit, doing things in the Lord's way, not your way. The second is that you embrace the marginalized of this world, or as the Savior said, the lost, the last, and the least.

Act According to the Spirit

Years ago my father said the following: "The real challenge today is not in outer space but in inner man. To reconcile the how of our living with the why of our existence and in the synthesis to emerge the child of God that we know we are. . . . May your life bear an unalterable testimony that there is knowledge—independent of reason—[a

knowledge that is able to alter lives and which can only be found through obedience] to the voice of . . . God within us."²

The ultimate foundation of all you do in life should be to live so that the voice and integrity of the Spirit take precedence as the powerful, necessary force in determining your actions, both professionally and personally.

You live in an age that needs a profound inner spiritual rebirth. Yours is a time that calls for men and women willing to assert their birthright of choice to alter and shape lives and institutions in a way that reflects the moral and spiritual values dictated by the Spirit of God. Unless you can arrive at that point, you will idolize and surround yourself with the trivial.

Acting according to the Spirit, however, is not always easy. It often requires significant sacrifice and at times deep obedience against the purely rational mind.

I am sure each of you has given thought to your future. Most of you have probably thought, "It's now time to become part of the

real world.” Let me assure you it is not and never will be that time. Rather, this is the time to resolve forever to stand above the world—your goal must not be assimilation into the real world but to disrupt it.

The Lord has said, “Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 [in Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*]).

To build up His kingdom you must forsake and sacrifice to establish every needful thing of conscience. You have to stand up and bear witness and testimony in uncomfortable and even threatening circumstances.

By the voice of the Spirit, you will be asked to walk unmarked paths, many times needing to do things that make little sense. You will have to build a Kirtland Temple, like Joseph, with no money; or retrieve brass plates, like Nephi, against an army of 50 (see 1 Nephi 3:31; 4:1).

It is not the maximization of wealth or success that underpins the command to “let your light so shine before men” (Matthew 5:16); rather, it is Spirit-directed acts of sacrifice and courage that build and edify. These also are the acts that blaze new pathways that astonish this world.

The intimate and absolute test of your life will be whether you hearken with exactness to the voice of the Spirit of God within you—using all the talents and gifts and education He has given you—to bring to pass His work and His glory (see Moses 1:39) and not your work and your glory. The great charge to Joseph Smith as he opened this dispensation was to “*Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Unless you hear and follow the voice of the Spirit, you cannot and will not survive this day and time—and you will certainly never achieve the impact your life could otherwise realize.

While I was a young business professional, I heard a voice shout inside me, “You need to leave this place and this job.” So, I walked out on Wall Street—leaving a large bonus on the table—and joined a small investment company in Boston that paid me less than half of what I was then earning.

I did not doubt that voice. It made neither logical nor financial sense. It made no sense to many of my friends, and I could not fully explain it to them.

In time, though, as I followed the voice of the Spirit to walk away, doors opened that allowed me to become an instrument in the hands of the Lord in helping lift countless people out of poverty, disease, and hopelessness. The decision to leave made sense only in hindsight, but being true to the voice changed everything.

Whether you are on the farm pitching hay and harvesting potatoes, in the home raising a family, or at the office working as a manager, you will not be whole and healed and fully empowered unless you receive the voice of the Spirit and go and do whatever it directs.

Embrace the Marginalized

For better or worse, the reality of our world is that we live in a day and hour when both good and powerful evil share the geography of our time.

You are not here by accident. You are here by choice. You wanted the opportunity to prove yourself. You are here at a time of morally twisted opposition that calls “evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20). You elected to stand here to give service and to love.

Today we have great divisions before us. Within and without the Church there exist real stumbling blocks. Outside we are pressed daily by violence, invasion of individual liberty, discrimination, poverty, immorality, disease, and so much more. Inside the Church many struggle to reconcile and understand same-gender attraction, the role of women, or certain Church doctrines or historical events. Many struggle with doubt, lack of confidence or resources, zealotry, commitment, meeting schedules, leaders who offend, friends or children who stray, prayers that seem unanswered, or broken trusts through emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

Some would like to ignore or diminish these issues by contending with those that challenge our orthodoxy, or by delivering dismissive sermons, or by saying to those who struggle temporally or spiritually with doubt or depression to “just be patient; things will work out.” The Lord, however,

Your goal must not be assimilation into the real world but to disrupt it.

The Lord expects us to go into the highways and byways of people's lives and bring them to the Sacred Grove and to Gethsemane and Calvary.

expects more of us than words. He expects our personal ministry despite discomfort or personal rejection. He expects an outreach of charity. He expects us to go into the highways and byways of people's lives and bring them to the Sacred Grove and to Gethsemane and Calvary.

The scriptures teach that the Savior showed forth "an increase of love" (D&C 121:43) toward those He rebuked and toward those who denied Him. Against norms, He dined with sinners and ministered to the outcast, the grieved, and the unbeliever.

Nothing has more power to affect our lives than "the pure love of Christ," which is charity. Charity looks beyond self, choosing to bear and endure all things. If we live without charity, if we live indifferently, our Heavenly Father says, "[we] are nothing." (See Moroni 7:45–47.) That is, we live a life of vanity.

The night of the Lord's Atonement began with the Savior commanding the disciples

to make and renew a covenant to always remember and honor His sacrifice. Then, as described in the Gospel of John, He knelt and washed the feet of those who would in a few short hours betray Him, deny Him, or fall asleep in His most needed hour. He exhorted them to be one with Him, to forgive, to wash the feet of others, and to love each other as He loved them. He asked that they raise their vision to His vision. (See John 13.)

Can you see that the great charge of the Atonement of Christ is to love as He loved? To love those who betray, who offend, who fall asleep, who deny, who doubt, who are overzealous and cut off an ear with a sword or wound a heart with a harsh word or deed? To be long-suffering with those who will not hear and who will not love back?

Pilate did things the world's way. He washed his hands of the matter of justice and sold out, while the Savior pleaded for mercy for those who nailed Him to the cross.

In the Gospel of Mark, a religious leader named Jairus asked Jesus to give a blessing to his daughter, who was dying. As Jesus began the journey to Jairus's home, a woman who had been suffering for 12 years with "an issue of blood" touched His garment, hoping to be cured. Jesus turned and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

Desperate but faithful, the woman fell down before Him. He enveloped her with His grace, saying, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." In doing this, the Savior not only healed her physically but also healed





her spiritually. Through His ministry she was no longer a nobody but rather a “daughter,” a member of the family of God and once again a member of her own family and society.

While the Lord lingered, Jairus’s daughter died. Undeterred, Jesus still went forward to minister. He found family and friends weeping and asked why. He told them the young girl was not dead but was sleeping. The scriptures record that they “laughed him to scorn.” Ignoring them, He raised the girl from the dead. (See Mark 5:22–42.)

I keep in a frame on a wall in my home office these words of Elbert Hubbard: “God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas, but for scars.”³

This is the pattern that the Lord places before us as we work to do His work to lift others: we will be called upon to suffer innocently if we are to achieve what He needs us to achieve as His light before men.

We have around us many who are spiritually dead, and you must be willing to be laughed to scorn. Like the Savior, you must move forward against a world that does not believe, and you must not “shrink” (D&C 19:18) before the taunting of our secular world.

In the parable of the great supper, Jesus said, “And whosoever doth not bear [my] cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

In opening this last dispensation, He reminded us that He “partook” of “the bitter cup” and “finished” the required ascent to the cross (see D&C 19:18, 19). God expects engagement. You are to be a finisher and not an observer in the Savior’s battle for the souls of men. This is how we show our love to Him, “shine before men,” and receive His enabling power and grace in our own lives.

Give Your Life

Several years ago, when the late LDS author and professor Truman G. Madsen introduced me at a talk I delivered at Brigham Young University, he shared the following story: “Elder Jeffrey R. Holland . . . was in a meeting somewhere in a university, and from the audience, a student cried out in a mocking way, ‘Brother Holland! Would you give your life for Jesus?’ And he thought a minute and then said, ‘That’s what I thought I was doing.’”

Brother Madsen then said: “[There] are two ways of giving our lives, brothers and sisters: one is in the emergency where we give our life in death. But the other way is to give through our lives [in the *how* of our living].”⁴

May you do so with the resolve to live as a witness for Jesus Christ by letting your light “shine before men.” May you know that this will require you to “hear Him” and to bear with love the outcast, the enemy, the marginalized. May you understand that this is not a journey into the known but the unknown—it is a path of faith and integrity to the voice of the Holy Ghost that ultimately demands your sacrifice to be more than just good or less sinful but to become holy and consecrated.

In all of this my prayer is that each of you may find the strength to obey and repent as needed to live a life, dictated by the Spirit within, that bears witness that Jesus Christ is your priority. ■

From a commencement address, “Let Your Light Shine,” given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on April 10, 2015. For the full address, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

You are to be a finisher and not an observer in the Savior’s battle for the souls of men.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks to Robert C. Gay, Nov. 1, 2007.
2. Frank William Gay, speech at University of Utah, May 2000.
3. Elbert Hubbard, *A Thousand and One Epigrams: Selected from the Writings of Elbert Hubbard* (1911), 104.
4. Truman G. Madsen, remarks at Investment Professionals Conference, Brigham Young University, Sept. 12, 2008.