

Becoming Your Best Self

John Hilton III, Education Week 2005

No Excuses

“While you are free to choose for yourself, you are not free to choose the consequences of your actions. When you make a choice, you will receive the consequences of that choice. The consequences may not be immediate, but they will always follow, for good or bad. Wrong choices delay your progression and lead to heartache and misery. Right choices lead to happiness and eternal life. That is why it is so important for you to choose what is right throughout your life... You are responsible for the choices you make. You should not blame your circumstances, your family or your friends if you choose to disobey God’s commandments. You are a child of God with great strength. You have the ability to choose righteousness and happiness no matter what your circumstances” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 4-5).

“You may not know who your Sunday School teacher... will be next Sunday, but you can... pray specifically that the Holy Ghost will come to them as they prepare to teach and again as you sit at their feet to listen . . . I know it works. . . . I think you can have faith and confidence that you will never need to hear an unprofitable sermon or live in a ward where you are not fed spiritually” (Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God: A Collection of Discourses*, 11, 24).

“A cunning part of [Satan’s] strategy is to dissociate anger from agency, making us believe that we are victims of an emotion that we cannot control. [The phrase] ‘He made me mad’ ... is a myth that must be debunked. No one makes us mad. Others don’t make us angry. There is no force involved. Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry... We can choose not to become angry. And we can make that choice today, right now: ‘I will never become angry again.’ Ponder this resolution” (Elder Lynn G. Robbins, *Ensign*, May 1998, 81).

Language

“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

“Let us look for the good, the beautiful, the positive... Criticism, faultfinding, evil speaking—these are of the spirit of our day... Criticism is the forerunner of divorce, the cultivator of rebellion, sometimes a catalyst that leads to failure. I am suggesting that as we go through life we “accentuate the positive.” I am asking that we look a little deeper for the good, that we still voices of insult and sarcasm, that we more generously compliment virtue and effort... I am suggesting is that... we speak of one another’s virtues more than we speak of one another’s faults, that optimism replace pessimism, that our faith exceed our fears” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Apr. 1986, 2-4).

“Many times in our effort to refrain from improper speech, we find words to substitute. Sometimes they are so close to vulgar phrases everyone probably knows that we are substituting words and have not really improved our vocabulary.

“To anyone who has followed the practice of using profanity or vulgarity and would like to correct the habit, could I offer this suggestion? First, make the commitment to erase such words from your vocabulary. Next, if you slip and say a swear word or a substitute word, mentally reconstruct the sentence without the vulgarity or substitute word and repeat the new sentence aloud. Eventually you will develop a non-vulgar speech habit” (Elder L. Tom Perry, *New Era*, Aug. 1986, 7).

Gaining a Vision of What you can Become

“This is the great day of decision for each of us. For many it is the time of beginning something that will go on for as long as you live. I plead with you: don’t be a scrub! Rise to the high ground of spiritual, mental, and physical excellence. You can do it. You may not be a genius. You may be lacking in some skills. But so many of us can do better than we are now doing....We are people with a present and with a future. Don’t muff your opportunities. Be excellent” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Sept. 1999, 4–5).

“The Lord has placed currents of divine influence in your life that will lead you along the individual plan He would have you fulfill here on earth...I do not fully understand how it is done, but this divine current does not take away your moral agency. You can make the decisions you choose to make” (Elder Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 87). “You can ponder and let the Lord establish the direction of your life” (Elder Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Knowledge and the Strength to Use It Wisely,” *Ensign*, June 2002, 32).

“The Lord has a purpose for you, individually.... Discover it and fulfill it. It will likely not be revealed all at once but will be unfolded line upon line. As you pray and work hard, you will find threads of understanding that will lead you to the path the Lord wants you to follow for the greatest enduring, meaningful attainment, contribution, joy, and peace of mind. Faithfully and courageously follow those threads of understanding and direction” (Elder Richard G. Scott, *BYU Devotional*, “Learning to Succeed in Life,” 15 Sept. 1998).

“I believe that in our own individual ways, God takes us to the grove or the mountain or the temple and there shows us the wonder of what his plan is for us. We may not see it as fully as Moses or Nephi or the brother of Jared did, but we see as much as we need to see in order to know the Lord’s will for us and to know that he loves us beyond mortal comprehension” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, *BYU Devotional*, 2 March 1999).

In order for a man to exercise faith in God he must have “an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to [God’s] will” (*Lectures on Faith*, 3:5).

“If you and I have a sincere desire for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, invite His influence into our lives through our obedience and actions, and learn to heed simple promptings and to do so quickly, then I testify and promise that we will be able to tell the difference between our own emotions telling us what we want to hear and the Holy Ghost telling us what we need to hear” (Elder David A. Bednar, *BYU-Idaho Devotional*, August 31, 1999).

Testimony

“There is nothing more important in all the world than to have in our hearts a testimony...of the reality of God the Eternal Father and His Son, the risen Lord, the Redeemer of the world” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, August 2000, 3)

“Those who have prepared [to bear their testimony] . . . won’t give sermons or exhortations or travel reports or try to entertain as they bear witness. Because they will have already expressed appreciation to people privately, they will have less need to do it publicly. Neither will they feel a need to use eloquent language nor to go on at length” (Elder Henry B. Eyring, “Witnesses for God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 32).

“Your personal security and happiness depend upon the strength of your testimony” (Elder Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 87).