

In the Path of Their Duty

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Ricks College Devotional
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1. It is wonderful to meet with you this afternoon. To the new students, welcome to Ricks College. We are delighted to have you here on campus. To the returning students, welcome back! It is good to see you again. We look forward to a spiritually edifying and academically successful year with you.
2. I would prefer to say the things I want to say to you today in a one-on-one setting. Perhaps we would be seated in my office, or in a classroom, or in some other location where we could listen and talk without distractions or interruptions. The message I want to share today is very important--and is one I have been thinking about all summer. If we are to understand each other this afternoon, we will all need to participate in this devotional under the influence of the Holy Ghost. I pray for and invite the companionship of the third member of the Godhead for all of us.
3. Every month I am interviewed on KWBH, our student-operated radio station on campus, and I answer student call-in questions. One question I have been asked several times is this: "President, is there a particular message you would like to convey to the students who are listening?"
4. My answer is always the same: "I hope the students will work and strive to understand what a privilege it is to attend Ricks College."
5. Some of you may wonder why I refer to the opportunity of being a student at Ricks as a "privilege." Let me provide two major reasons why attending Ricks is a privilege.
6. Reason #1: Sacred tithing funds make it possible for you to be here. The price you pay for tuition and fees is only a small percentage of the actual cost of your educational experience at Ricks. Literally, the widow's mite, contributed from faithful Church members around the world, makes it possible for you to be here.
7. Reason #2: Approximately 100,000 LDS seniors graduated from high schools in North America last spring--and less than 10,000 can be admitted to a church college or university. Consequently, many worthy and capable young men and women were denied admission to Ricks and BYU.

In summary, then, attending Ricks College is both a privilege and a responsibility.

8. On one of my stake conference assignments several years ago, long before I knew much about or became the president of Ricks College, I stayed in the home of a good stake president. He and his wife had been blessed with eight children, and seven of those children previously had attended Ricks College. The ultimate dream of the eighth child, who was 17 years old at the time, was to attend Ricks College as her brothers and sisters had done. I was present in their home the day that last child opened the letter from the Admissions Office indicating she had been denied admission to Ricks College. This young woman was so

worthy, so qualified academically, and so desirous. But there simply was not enough room that year at Ricks to accommodate all of the good young people in the Church who wanted to attend. She was so disappointed. I shall never forget the things I saw and felt in that home that afternoon. And you should know my experience with that worthy young woman and many others like her who are not admitted into Ricks College has a significant impact on how I view you students who have been admitted into and are now attending Ricks College.

9. The scene I have just described was replayed in more than a thousand homes last spring as faithful and worthy young people received similar letters from our Admissions Office. Consider also that tithing paid by the families whose children were denied admission makes it possible for you to be here. Let me emphasize again--attending school at Ricks is both a privilege and a responsibility.
10. The major theme for my comments this afternoon is found in James 1:8. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." My objective today is to review both the doctrine and principles related to integrity and honesty. As the verse in James suggests, I am going to begin by defining the opposite of integrity.

In my study of the scriptures, I have come across four extremely interesting phrases:

- Double minded (James 1:8)
- Double heart (I Chronicles 12:33; Psalms 12:2)
- Divided heart (Hosea 10:2)
- Double tongued (JST 1 Timothy 3:8)

11. Each of these verses describes the problems and consequences associated with saying one thing and doing another--with attempting to serve two masters--with dividing our loyalty and allegiance between God and the world. A few questions will highlight what I mean:

- Do you and I think, talk, and act differently around our parents, our bishop, our teachers, and our friends?
- Do you and I have a public face and a public language that are significantly different from our private face and private language?
- Do you and I think, talk, and act differently in our classes on campus and in our church meetings on Sunday than we do in our apartments?

12. These questions strike at the heart of what I think the Lord intended with the phrases double minded, double heart, divided heart, and double tongued. You and I are double minded when who we really are, our thoughts, our speech, and our behavior, vary according to where we are and with whom we are associating. For example,

- a double heart is when a young woman wears shorter skirts to church on Sunday than she does to school during the week because she is less concerned about being confronted and getting caught at Church;

- a divided heart is when a young man removes his earring and puts it in his pocket before entering a class and then puts it on again as quickly as he can once he leaves the classroom;

- double minded is signing the honor code and then trying to find an off-campus apartment complex where you believe the curfew will not be strictly observed--where a student thinks he or she can break a commitment and not get caught; and

- double tongued is partaking of the sacrament on Sunday and publicly proclaiming in a testimony meeting a desire to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost--then routinely watching "R" rated and other inappropriate movies and rationalizing that such movies are ". . . ok because they contain just one bad part, and I can handle it."

13. In essence, then, double mindedness is hypocrisy. And the Savior and his apostles had some very sharp and stern things to say about hypocrisy and hypocrites.

14. Compare, if you will, the notion of double mindedness to the following verses:

15. And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work (D&C 4:5; emphasis added).

16. And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things (D&C 88:67; emphasis added).

17. But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions . . . (Jacob 3:1; emphasis added).

18. When we have an eye single to the glory of God and are striving to align our will with His will, then we are on the way to developing the trait of integrity. In the language of the scriptures, our minds are becoming firm.

19. One way of defining integrity is (1) the alignment of our personal desires with the will of God and (2) a consistency of what we think, what we say, and what we do across different settings. Please note in Mosiah 4:30 the eternal significance of our thoughts, our speech, and our actions.

20. But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not (emphasis added).

21. If we have integrity and are honest, then we think and speak and act the same way in front of our bishop, in front of our parents, in front of our teachers, and in front of our friends--in both public and private settings.

22. As a student at Ricks College, you have a remarkable opportunity to develop integrity. And two of the tools that will help you on this journey are the honor and dress codes.

23. Throughout the scriptures reference is made to two overarching levels of spiritual development: the preparatory level and the higher level. For example,

- the law of Moses preceded and was a preparation for the law of the gospel that the Savior taught;
- the Aaronic Priesthood precedes and is a preparation for the Melchizedek Priesthood;
- we must understand and obey the letter of the law before we can obtain the spirit of the law; and
- as Paul taught, we must first digest spiritual milk before we are ready for spiritual meat.

24. My dear young brothers and sisters, the honor and dress codes are not obstacles designed by out-of-touch old people to hassle you during your time on the Ricks College campus. Rather, the honor code is a lesser law preparation to enter the house of the Lord and make sacred covenants, and the dress code is a lesser law preparation for how you will dress and should act after you have entered into those covenants. If you struggle at Ricks College to obey the lesser and preparatory guidelines contained in the honor and dress codes, then may I candidly suggest that you will not be prepared to make those covenants in the temple.
25. If you have already entered into these sacred covenants in the temple, the honor and dress codes serve as a partial measurement of how well you are honoring and keeping those covenants. I emphasize that students who have previously entered into these covenants (returned missionaries and married students) have a particular and weighty responsibility to set a worthy example for those who are preparing and learning. As we learn in the 82nd section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "For of him unto whom much is given much is required" (verse 3).
26. All of you young men who are freshmen should look forward to serving as full-time missionaries for the Church. As you prepare to go to the temple, you will be interviewed by your bishop and stake president. One of the questions you will be asked is this: "Are you totally honest in your dealings with your fellow men?" Young men, if you consistently and willfully violate the honor and dress codes during your freshman year here, you will not be able to look your bishop and stake president in the eye and in good conscience answer "yes" to that question. Now is the time to begin preparing for that interview.
27. Young men and women, some of you may meet a worthy companion during this academic year and desire to enter the house of the Lord to be sealed together for time and all eternity. If you treat the lesser law preparation of the honor and dress codes with casualness and impunity, then you will have trouble answering affirmatively the honesty question from your bishop and stake president. Now is the time to begin preparing for that interview.
28. How you feel about and respond to the honor and dress codes are excellent indicators of how you are doing in preparing to go to the temple; they also provide powerful evidence of how well we are honoring the covenants we have already made.
29. Much discussion occurs on this campus about the topic of enforcing the honor and dress codes. Focusing upon enforcement totally misses the issue and emphasizes a symptom of the problem rather than the root cause of the problem. The solution to this issue is really very simple. We do not need more or better enforcement. We simply need more obedience. You can read and understand these codes; that is all that should be necessary. An endless checklist

of what can and cannot be done, what can and cannot be worn, is contrary to the spirit of the honor code.

30. Turn with me to Mosiah 4: 29. In this verse we learn that King Benjamin also was unwilling to provide an extensive checklist of do's and don'ts for his people.
31. And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.
32. Disobedience is the root cause of the problem. Ineffective enforcement is merely a symptom of this much larger and important problem. Enforcement is control that comes from "outside" of us and can never be effective. Obedience is submission to the will of God that comes from "within" us and brings the blessings of heaven.

Please turn with me to 2 Nephi 2:14.

33. And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon (emphasis added).
34. The question we may ask is this: What things are to act and what things are to be acted upon? The answer is found in verse 16 of the same chapter.
35. Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other (emphasis added).
36. Men and women are to act and not be acted upon. Obedience as submission from "within" is acting for ourselves. Enforcement as control from "outside" is being acted upon.

Highlighting a similar theme, President Marion G. Romney taught:

37. The only safety we have in the world for our children is what they build within themselves. We can make restrictions against drinking and smoking, and we can make regulations to guide the affairs of people. We can throw all the protections possible around them, but after all, the thing that holds them in the final test is what is inside of them. They must be able to stand alone. (Howard F. Burton, MARION G. ROMNEY: HIS LIFE AND FAITH, pg. 153)
38. I am convinced that students violate the honor and dress codes for two and only two reasons: (1) they either do not understand the codes, or (2) they choose to willfully rebel.
39. To the students who perhaps did not read and understand the codes thoroughly at the time you signed and committed to live by them, you now have the responsibility to study, understand, and live them. That is the commitment you made when you signed the honor code. I pledge that our faculty and staff will do all in our power to help you in this learning process.
40. To the few students who perhaps plan to willfully rebel, I invite you to go somewhere else to attend college. You will not be happy here, and you have no claim upon the resources of the Church. The place you occupy should rightfully be made available to a deserving young man or woman who will appreciate and benefit from the Spirit of Ricks.

41. The test of the honor and dress codes is not whether you get caught or if they are consistently enforced. The absolute test of the honor and dress codes is how a student thinks and talks and acts when no one is around to enforce the codes--when no one is checking. The question, then, is whether we will enforce in our own lives that which is ultimately unenforceable. The honor and dress codes are a lesser law test of integrity and honesty.
42. The honor and dress codes measure you and me, and what we may perceive as an apparent inconsistency of application or lack of enforcement does not invalidate the importance of that measurement.
43. You may listen to my comments and conclude that I do not believe Ricks students heed the honor and dress codes. Let me be just as clear as I can be. The overwhelming majority of our Ricks students understand what I have just described and are striving to obey the honor and dress codes with full purpose of heart. You who are so abiding these preparatory laws are described in Helaman 15:5-6:
44. And I would that ye should behold that the more part of them are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments according to the law of Moses.
45. Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and they are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth; therefore there are many who do add to their numbers daily (emphasis added).
46. As described in verse 6, we have a covenant obligation to both obey the honor and dress codes ourselves and to assist others in so living. Our objective is not to become the ultimate enforcers; rather, it is to encourage and help everyone in our community of Saints here at Ricks College to honor and abide by our commitments.
47. We do not want an environment on this campus characterized by self-appointed, judgmental, and self-righteous spiritual vigilantes. We do want an environment on this campus where appropriately and genuinely concerned "neighbors," in the true scriptural sense of the word neighbor, would remind, help, and encourage us to consistently think, speak, and act in a way that invites the Spirit of the Holy Ghost among us.
48. A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. If you came to Ricks College under false pretenses, if you were not totally honest with your bishop in your worthiness interview, you need to repent. The Holy Ghost and your bishop here on campus can help you overcome double mindedness and develop an eye single to the glory of God. Please do not wait. Please do not procrastinate the day of your repentance. Prepare yourself totally now so you can receive the blessings the Lord has in store for you while you are a student at Ricks College.
49. Please turn with me now to 2 Nephi 31: 10-13. In chapter 31 Nephi describes why Christ was baptized and outlines the fundamental elements of the doctrine of Christ. Beginning in verse 10:
50. And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?
51. And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved son.

52. And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.
53. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent . . . (emphasis added)
54. Note the specific reference to no hypocrisy and no deception before God. Now, notice the footnote that links the phrase ". . . with real intent . . ." to the topical guide. To what topic is the phrase ". . . with real intent . . ." linked? Integrity. Thus, we can also read verse 13 as: ". . . ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with integrity . . . "
55. repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism--yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel (2 Nephi 31:13).
56. Brothers and sisters, we must learn to follow the Son with real intent, with true integrity, with minds that are firm, and overcome our tendency to be double-minded. Doing so will bring peace, joy, and happiness beyond description. I testify that these principles I have discussed today are true. I know that God the Eternal Father lives. I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Savior and Redeemer. And I know and witness that the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth in this latter-day dispensation through the prophet Joseph Smith. This is a living church directed by a living Savior through true apostles and prophets. These things I know, and of these things I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.