

**Realizing the Mission of BYU–Idaho:  
Developing disciple-leaders**

**Kim B. Clark**

May 10, 2007 All-Employee Meeting

Brothers and sisters, it's a pleasure to spend a few moments with you. This is a remarkable time to be part of Brigham Young University–Idaho, and I would like to share some thoughts about the university and its divinely appointed purpose.

Prophetic vision guides BYU–Idaho in the fulfillment of its institutional mission, which is to prepare young people for the marvelous work the Lord has in store for them. I believe two companion principles define our mission: discipleship and leadership. These principles will help prepare BYU–Idaho students for their roles in the Lord's kingdom and in the world.

The development of “disciple-leaders” is the focus of every aspect of BYU–Idaho. It is crucial that we all remember we are pursuing this mission in the 21st Century. At BYU–Idaho, we are developing generations of disciple-leaders for the world, and for the Church in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

*Institutional Framework*

I'd like to begin our discussion by looking at a framework that pulls together the key dimensions of the foundation and character of BYU–Idaho. At a time when so much is changing, it is critical we understand those things that must not be changed. This framework defines the enduring aspects of the university that will allow us to always realize the prophetic vision and the mission of BYU–Idaho.

The framework is defined by a circle representing the great whole of the university. The image of a circle reinforces the university's connected nature. It underscores the fact that each of the elements is designed to work with the others in an integrated way.

*Student Honor*

At the very center of the framework is Student Honor. Student Honor is a preparatory process at the heart of the university and the BYU–Idaho experience.



Student Honor encompasses our standards and guidelines, processes for education, and the university’s system of discipline. Taken together, the whole experience teaches our students true principles, prepares them for the higher law and eternal covenants they will make, and protects them and the university.

## STUDENT HONOR

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- Key Elements:
  - Code of Honor
  - Dress and Grooming Standards
  - Housing Guidelines
- Prepare and Protect
- Exemplary, Temple-worthy Employees



The first key element of Student Honor is the Code of Honor: the standards and principles common to all CES institutions. These include living a chaste and virtuous life, obeying the Word of Wisdom, being honest in our dealings with our fellow men, attending church, and living a Christ-like life. Other elements of Student Honor include the dress and grooming standards and housing guidelines. These help define the atmosphere where students live and study, and where employees work.

The purpose of Student Honor is both to prepare our students to be disciples of the Savior and to protect them and the university from evil. These standards are crucial to the BYU–Idaho experience. They apply to all of us. Exemplary, temple-worthy employees are also absolutely crucial to Student Honor. It is vital that the university, through the example of its employees, be a living model of the highest gospel standards. All employees should represent the Church, the university, and its divine mission to the students who look to them for guidance and direction.

*The Spirit of Ricks*



The core of Student Honor makes possible the very special spirit felt on this campus. That spirit which we call the Spirit of Ricks is on this campus because of the obedience and faithfulness of all who study and work here. I believe the Spirit of Ricks is the defining characteristic of this university.

## THE SPIRIT OF RICKS

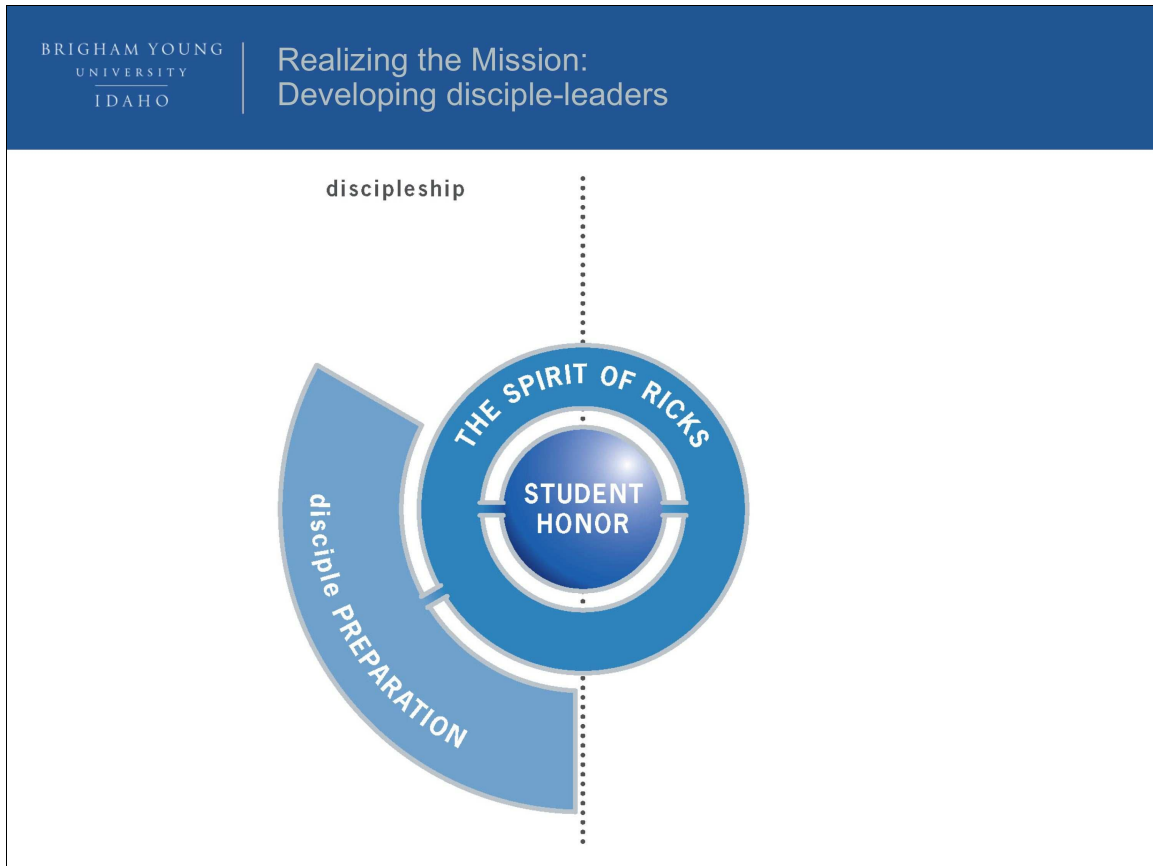
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- Ministry of the Holy Ghost
- Gifts of the Spirit
- Love, Service, Kindness, Care, and Concern



Elder David A. Bednar taught that the Spirit of Ricks is the ministry of the Holy Ghost and its attendant spiritual gifts. As a member of the Godhead, the mission of the Holy Ghost is to testify, to reveal, to comfort, to sanctify, and to strengthen. The ministry of the Holy Ghost brings wonderful feelings and tremendous blessings to the campus. It brings the gifts described in the scriptures to students and employees. These gifts include discernment, love and faith, kindness, charity. They include the capacity to teach with power and authority, the capacity to learn, love and serve.

## *Disciple Preparation*



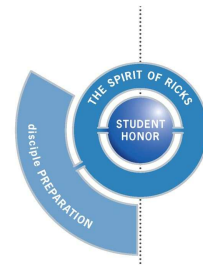
Spirit and honor are at the core of BYU–Idaho. They support and motivate the realization of our divine mission through disciple preparation, leadership development, and inspired learning and teaching. Let’s look first at BYU–Idaho as a disciple preparation center.

In describing the university as a disciple preparation center, Elder Bednar gave inspired emphasis to BYU–Idaho’s mission to prepare disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many dimensions of the university that help our students become disciples of Christ. Let me review with you some of the most important:

## disciple PREPARATION

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- Building on the Core of Honor and Spirit  
Obedience  
Learning and Teaching by the Spirit
- Wards and Stakes
- Weekly Devotional—Gathering for Zion
- Temple
- Principles of Zion  
Sacrifice  
Unity  
Love



Obedience to the commandments of the Lord and to the standards and guidelines that define the framework of Student Honor is fundamental to discipleship. An environment of obedience is crucial to the development of disciples.

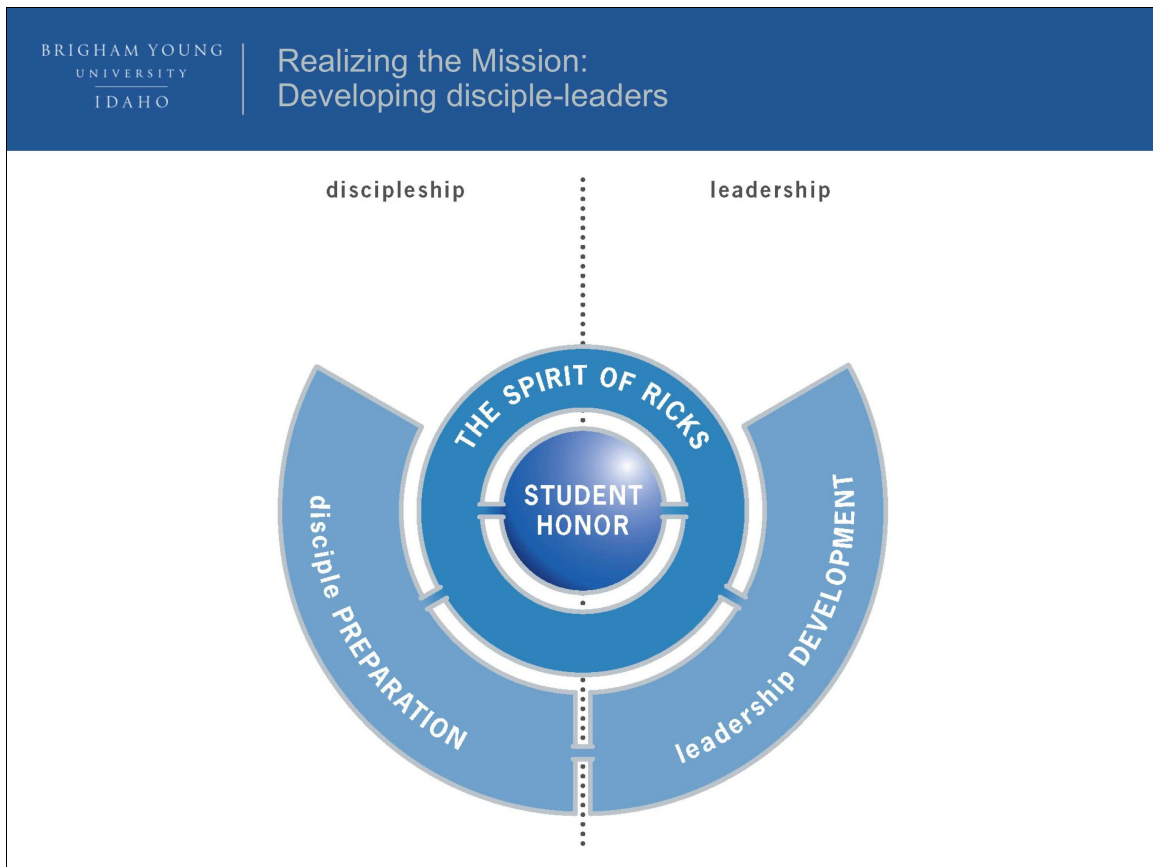
Disciples must come to know the Spirit. BYU–Idaho faculty members teach by the Spirit and thus help students learn not only the specific content of their courses, but also how to learn. Students learn to listen to the spirit of the Lord. They come to see and feel the Holy Ghost in their lives, teaching them and guiding them.

Of course, students have many opportunities to be instructed by the Spirit outside of class. We have wonderful wards and stakes of Zion on the campus. Weekly devotionals allow the university to gather and be instructed by the Spirit.

It is significant that we live and work near a temple. There students may enter into the presence of the Lord, obtain deeper understanding of the plan of salvation, and strengthen their commitment to eternal covenants. We are blessed by the presence of the temple in Idaho Falls, and soon we will have a temple right next to our campus. When the Rexburg Temple is complete and dedicated, we need to be prepared to fill that temple day and night.

In this context of obedience, the ministry of the Holy Ghost, and temple worship we work hard to help our students learn true principles that will help them establish Zion wherever they go. We prepare our students for discipleship in Zion by teaching and practicing the principles of sacrifice, unity, and love.

### *Leadership Development*





It is our great privilege and our mission to prepare the wonderful students of BYU–Idaho to be disciples of the Savior and leaders in their homes, in the Church, and the world around them. Leadership development therefore is a critical partner to disciple preparation in the lives of our students. The leadership I have in mind is leadership with a small “L”; leadership in the home, the ward, the community, and the workplace. [Please note we have written discipleship and leadership in lowercase letters.]

This effort follows the pattern of leadership the Savior taught to James and John in Matthew 20:25:

“He called them unto Him and said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister and whosoever be chief among you let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered on to but to minister and give His life for ransom for many.”

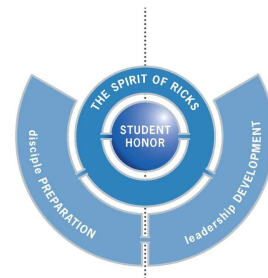
The Savior is the great exemplar of small “L” leadership—leadership that serves and ministers, loves and supports, and blesses other people. This is the type of leadership we seek to develop in our students.

Our approach to leadership development centers on the student leadership model. In this approach we engage our students in active leadership with meaningful responsibility across the university. They are required to lead, direct, and move things forward in managing many of our programs and activities.

## leadership DEVELOPMENT

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- Framework: Leadership with a Small “L”
- University-wide Application
  - Activities Program
  - Heber J. Grant Program
  - Student Employment
- Wards and Stakes

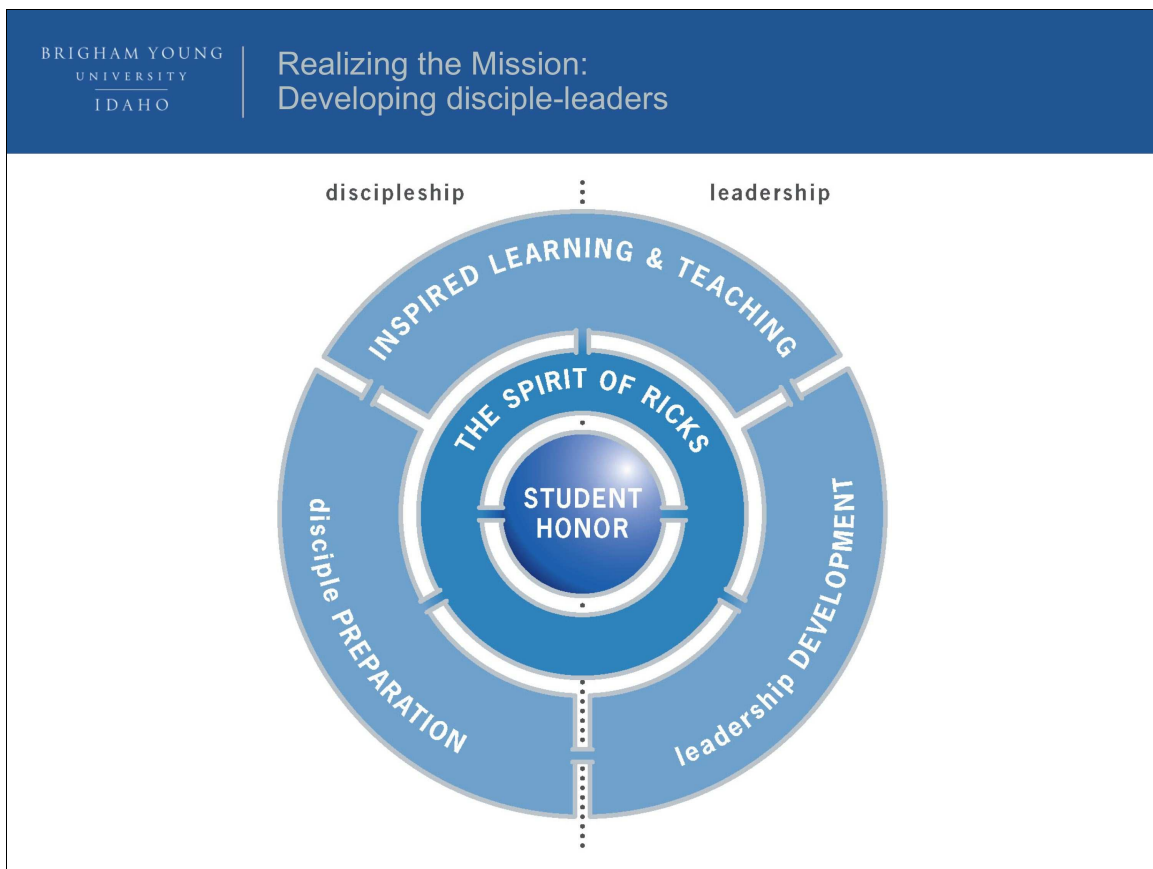


There are many examples: let me mention just two. The best and largest example is the Student Activities Program, which offers a wide range of activities that are student led, student organized, and student run. The program includes activities in six areas: Social, Service, Talent, Outdoor, Fitness, and Sports. Thousands of students participate. Another example is the Heber J. Grant Program, which provides leadership opportunities and financial support to worthy young people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and who have overcome those disadvantages to attend BYU–Idaho.

This student-led program involves mentoring and teaching and supporting the Heber J. Grant scholars in their work at BYU–Idaho. Approximately 1,000 students participate in the Heber J. Grant Program. But thanks to the great leadership capability of students who direct, organize, and teach, the program is overseen by a professional staff of only one administrator. Students who participate in this program have a tremendous experience.

If we add to the Student Leadership Model the tremendous number of students involved in student employment and ward and stake callings, we begin to see the power of leadership development. In effect, BYU–Idaho is becoming a great leadership development process—thousands of students every year receive leadership training and leadership experience.

*Inspired Learning and Teaching*



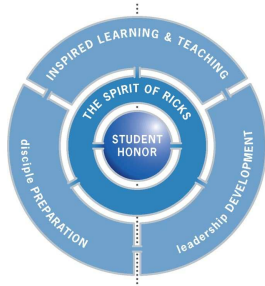
Learning by faith and teaching by the Spirit complete and perfect the circle of discipleship and leadership. At BYU–Idaho, students prepare for work and for life by engaging in an educational process defined by experiential and active learning where inspired faculty teach by the Spirit.

We have placed inspired learning and teaching at the top of the diagram, completing the circle and giving it its integrity. Inspired learning and teaching is the symbolic keystone to the overall campus experience. It brings discipleship preparation and leadership development together into one great whole.

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY IDAHO | Realizing the Mission: Developing disciple-leaders

**INSPIRED LEARNING AND TEACHING**

- Teaching-focused / Student-centered University
  - Small Classes
  - Consecrated Employees
- Active / Experiential
  - Internships and Practicums
  - Student Peer Instruction
- Application Across the University



Several elements of teaching and learning give BYU–Idaho its distinctive character. BYU–Idaho is a teaching-focused, student-centered university. This is a very unusual combination. Most universities are research-focused and faculty-centered. BYU–Idaho is not.

Small classes play a significant role in the feeling of intimacy our students experience, but I believe the most important element in creating that sense of belonging and connection is consecrated employees. Consecrated faculty, consecrated staff, and

consecrated administrators—these are the people who love students and are committed to do the Lord’s will and His work.

At BYU–Idaho, we believe every employee is a teacher. This is not just rhetoric; it’s a true statement. Students have a very intimate and powerful relationship with the faculty in their classes, but they also learn from and are influenced by our professional staff and administrators. We want everyone in this university to teach by example and by precept. Many students have their most important and powerful educational experiences through interaction with the employees of BYU–Idaho.

The university’s focus has a distinctive influence. Our approach to education is focused on preparing young people for work and for life. Many BYU–Idaho students go on to graduate school, which is a great blessing in their lives. But the university’s primary focus is *not* preparing young people for graduate school; it is to prepare them for their future roles in the home, the Church, and the community.

Our experience has shown that if BYU–Idaho prepares students well for work and life by teaching them how to take responsibility, learn effectively, get things done, be appropriately confident in the Lord and humble about their own capability, they will be successful wherever they go—including those who choose to attend graduate school.

We pursue this focus on work and life through a variety of active and experiential initiatives, including the internship program, practicums, and an emerging program within the university called Student Peer Instruction. BYU–Idaho is engaging students in a very powerful way in teaching one another. Over time, it will become apparent that the most powerful way for students to learn is for them to teach—they will teach to learn. In all these ways we pursue inspired learning and teaching that integrates disciple preparation and leadership development.

*Conclusion*

This framework captures the enduring, fundamental characteristics of BYU–Idaho: Student Honor and the Spirit of Ricks at the center – the spiritual heart of the university – with disciple preparation and leadership development fitting together through inspired learning and teaching.

I believe that as BYU–Idaho looks to the future, we must preserve and strengthen these elements. The university is in a time of great change. The Lord is preparing these young people for a very challenging world. Our students must be educated, developed, and prepared in a far more effective way than ever has been done before.

Now, I'd like to close by sharing with you an e-mail we received from the parents of a student. This family had a very profound experience with BYU–Idaho that I believe captures the essence of what this university is about. Here is their story:

“We’ve felt the spirit of BYU–Idaho in many ways. When our oldest daughter came, we watched as she went from a social butterfly with little thought of grades to a serious student that loved BYU–Idaho. Thanks to wonderful teachers, she became inspired to pursue her degree in English and minor in Secondary Education. She not only accomplished her goal but managed to graduate in just three years – quite a transformation from a girl who didn’t like to open a book.

“Our son then came to BYU–Idaho. He had struggled with his testimony for many years and was for the most part quite difficult. He had difficulty following rules and lacked direction. While on campus one time when both of our children were there, I noticed how so many of the professors would greet my daughter by name. Very impressive, but not shocking. She was an easy one to like. I then observed that just as many professors were greeting my son and even hugging him. That was amazing. The professors at BYU–Idaho truly love their students.

“My son still continued to struggle into his second year and subsequent summer at home. After much prayer and fasting, he made the decision to go back to BYU–

Idaho. His main reason was his love of his bishop. His bishop stood by him, and he made it back to BYU–Idaho in the winter of 2006. Our son loved basketball, and the intramural teams were what he lived for. To be able to finish class and then play ball was the best. His school work improved. His outlook improved, and his spirit soared. He was anxiously working on sending in his papers for his mission in December.

“Our next experience with BYU–Idaho is very tender and sweet to us. In the summer of 2006 while attending Summer Semester, our son went tubing and drowned. In our sorrow and grief, BYU–Idaho was extraordinary. They helped us meet with the boys that were with him so we might all find comfort together. They cared for our needs as we cleaned his apartment and took care of his affairs. Above this, they sent the word out to the student body. We were overwhelmed with the support and love from these students. Students that had known him in his first year came to visit us. It was truly beautiful to know that your child was so loved by his peers.

“The administration and the public affairs department went above and beyond. They compiled a book of all the students’ memories and thoughts, found us his jersey, signed a basketball with his current team, and much more. We were so touched by their tenderness and their care. We flew out a week later for a memorial on campus that the university arranged, and we marveled that we could have been so blessed to have had him attend this campus.

“You will never know what peace it has brought to our hearts to know just how much our son was loved by those at BYU–Idaho. From his peers to his professors, his bishop, even his landlord, all helped us to feel the spirit of BYU–Idaho. We are grateful to have the opportunity to feel the great spirit that exists here on this campus. And look forward to enjoying this experience again with others of our children.”

Brothers and sisters, this *is* BYU–Idaho. This is what we do. I believe the experience of that young man and his family is a microcosm of what this university is about. It’s an expression of very deep and powerful principles taught by the Savior in 3 Nephi, Chapter 18. In verse 24, Christ teaches:

“Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine into the world. Behold, I am the light which ye shall hold up. That which ye have seen me do; behold, ye see that I have prayed unto the Father and ye have all witnessed. And ye see that I have commanded that none of you shall go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me. That ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world.”

Brothers and sisters, please notice these key words: “come,” “feel,” and “see.” The Savior commands us to let our light and His light shine, so that others may come unto Him, feel Him, and see Him among us. This is what disciples do. This is what we want our students to learn to be.

As we look forward to the great work that lies ahead for BYU–Idaho, I pray we may see these verses of 3 Nephi as a great mandate, both individually and collectively. I believe what the Savior taught there applies to this university—His university. I believe He wants BYU–Idaho to be a light unto the world; a place that exemplifies Him in its work, in its spirit and everything it does.

I believe He wants BYU–Idaho to be a great temple of learning through disciple preparation, the development of leaders, and inspired learning and teaching. We must invite all who come here to come unto Him, so they might feel His love, His mercy, and His grace, and become true disciples. We must live our lives so that all who come here might comprehend the light, and receive the blessings of knowledge, wisdom, power, and salvation He desires to give them. I know this is what the Lord desires for them and for us. And I pray that all of us – no matter what we do or what our assignment is – will take this great charge to heart.



I bear witness to you with all the energy of my soul that He lives. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. He is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. He is the living Son of the living God. This is His church and His kingdom, and this is His university. I bear witness to you of my own experience that the heavens are open and that the Lord Jesus Christ is in charge. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.