

College of Fine Arts and Communications Convocation Address, 8/13/04 Dean Stephen Jones

Before I offer a few remarks to the graduates, I would like to share with all of you some facts about our college. The College of Fine Arts and Communications offers 36 majors in its four departments. After the College of Family, Home and Social Sciences and the Marriott School of Management it is the third largest college at BYU, with over 3600 majors. The Marriott School had only 24 more majors than we did, so I think with the rights admissions policies, we could easily slip into second place! We have about 1450 majors in Communications, 450 in Theatre and Media Arts, 950 in Visual Arts, and 750 in the School of Music. 346 of our students graduated in April, and another 275 students will graduate today.

In addition to these four academic units, we are privileged to have BYU Broadcasting, the Division of Arts Production, and the Museum of Art as part of our college.

Our graduating seniors have recently begun to participate in a survey. Let me share just a few data points gathered from those who graduated from our college last April.

- 63% of were female, 37% male.
- 87% were Caucasian, with the next largest racial group being Asian or Pacific Islanders at 9%.
- 99% were LDS and 91% were US citizens.
- 41% anticipated employment in their major field after graduation, compared to 38% across the university.
- 60% indicate they had no credit card debt, perhaps in part because 69% said they worked between 11 and 30 hours a week.
- 51% were married, and of those, 11% had one child.
- When they entered BYU, 76% thought a bachelors degree would be the highest degree they would obtain. Now only 46% feel that way, while 40% anticipate receiving a masters degree and another 13% a doctorate.

Dads and moms, based on those last statistics, you might be receiving further requests for financial assistance from your children after today's ceremonies!

Given that many of you may be headed for more schooling, and that all of you will need to continue to learn throughout your lives, I would like to offer just a few thoughts about things you must continue to learn.

First, you must learn to know truth from error. This principle is fundamental. In Genesis we read that "God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness."¹ Said President Joseph F. Smith, "That intelligence, that spiritual knowledge, spiritual intelligence which will enable you to discern between truth and error, and

¹ Genesis 1:4.

between light and darkness and good and evil, *this is the great thing for us to seek after and to obtain.*”²

Brigham Young said, “We must have the testimony of the Lord Jesus to enable us to discern between truth and error, light and darkness, him who is of God, and him who is not of God, *and to know how to place everything where it belongs.*”³ Putting everything where it belongs, both in your minds and your life, is the manifestation that you have learned to discern between truth and error. Knowing truth from error will bring order and balance to your life.

Next, if you have sought light and truth and now find order and balance increasing in your life, you must learn to be a light to the world. Light accompanies truth. It is the means whereby we see truth. While at BYU you have, I trust, seen light in the eyes of your professors, your fellow students, or your ward members. You have felt light enter your mind as you saw your way forward in a sculpture or a painting you made, or organized the thesis of a paper you wrote, or edited a video. The moment you saw that light, it divided you from some level of uncertainty and confusion. It brought intelligence to you and you could see. Being a light to the world means helping others see *their* way forward. You will spread light as you share a compelling insight with a coworker, allow others to watch you work for months or even years to solve a weakness in your character, or achieve, through your diligence and the Lord’s grace, important levels of accomplishment and service in your field. In all of these activities, others will see your light, and they will know you have divided out darkness from you. They will know and see God working in you, because we all know, instinctively, that our light comes from him through his Son.

Lastly, as you see more clearly between truth and error and feel your light radiate toward others you will learn to increase your talents. Light, when you experience it regularly and consistently, *magnifies* in you. You begin to see who you really are, and you increase your faith in your mission. The gifts and skills you have will grow, and their increase will give you power to accomplish things you could not otherwise do alone. The light of the Savior, who is the Light of the world, will direct you in seeing how your gifts can be used to bless and lift those around you.

Whether you create copy for a newspaper or research jazz influences in contemporary orchestral music; whether you teach high school students about glazing techniques or study the difference between on stage and on camera lighting, you have all experienced these basic principles. You will want to continue using them in the learning still ahead of you.

As you have opportunity, divide the light in you from the darkness, let the light increase so that it becomes visible to others in natural and honest ways, and use that light to illuminate and magnify your talents.

² Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith, p. 183. Italics added.

³ Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, p. 315. Italics added.

You go now on to the next phase of your important lives, using the power of the arts and the media to communicate the truths and beauties of your individual disciplines informed by the values of the gospel. Always remember the sacrifice of the tithe payers who have made it possible for you to learn here in this special environment. Dedicate yourselves to give back to the Church, your families, the world, and the Lord the increase of your talents made possible through your BYU education. Begin now to donate your means, even in small amounts, to enable other students to come here and learn.

You will be watched throughout the rest of your lives to see if the light in you is aligned with that for which BYU stands. Please, please stay worthy of that sacred trust. Sometime today, perhaps as you kneel to pray this evening, ask the Lord to help you put everything in its place, to help you to divide light and darkness, to help you radiate his light and see the path to take to increase your talents. Ask that you might play and sing the music of hope to the entire planet through the instruments of your gifts, amplified by the light of your righteous character. As your faculty and leaders, we pray the Lord will bless each of you on life's journey, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.