

Service, Humility, Harmony: Necessities for a Joyful Journey



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My Dear Brothers & Sisters, Aloha!

President Tanner must've had a strong prompting to call the wicked to repentance because, here I am!

I want to thank my baby sister Tina Ishibashi, and my nephew Braden Sika for their creative intros. My sister and I are the two youngest of six siblings, and we are 7 years apart. Tina is a mother of 7 and grandmother of 4.

My nephew, Braden *aka* "B-Ezay" is a full-time employee here at BYU- Hawaii and is a part of the Facilities Management team. Braden is the youngest son of our oldest sister Jeniel who passed away in 2008. Braden is my baby. When my sister was pregnant with him, I went with her to every checkup, I was there for his birth, and I even got to name him. Had the doctor allowed me, I would've been happy to deliver him myself. Braden is now a father of 4 and is married to his high school sweetheart, Cora.

I wanted as many family members to take part in today's devotional so thank you to my nephews Herbert and Sky as well as my new niece Anya, for graciously.

accepting the invitation to offer the prayers and the spiritual thought. My nephews Kawehi and Malosi whom you will hear from in the second part of my talk.

I am grateful to my Musical Truth ohana for taking the time out of their already busy schedules to support me today. Before I even considered taking on this assignment, I messaged them and basically told them (no, I didn't ask) to take time off from work, call in dead if they had to, to assist me because without them, my family, and my Heavenly Father, I knew I wouldn't have been able to accomplish, on my own, a task of this caliber.

At first I thought, ok...5 minutes to talk, 25 minutes of music and boom! I'm done. I did make it a matter of prayer, and in our conversation, I presented my plan only for Heavenly Father to say," Negative! That's way too comfortable for you – speak on something you need to work on!" I hesitated of course, because whatever I speak on, I'll be held accountable, and to top it off...I'LL HAVE TO DO IT!

Nonetheless, under the direction of the big Kahuna...I shall proceed. So, my message today is based on three very basic elements. To me, these elements are necessities for life as we embark on our joyful journey.

SERVICE:

Today I wish to honor and pay tribute to the two most influential individuals in my life. My parents.

“And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of you God.” Mosiah 2:17

We all know that it's much easier to love and serve those we like. Although I grew up in a home with two of the best examples of service, I'll be totally honest; I struggled to serve those I didn't really like. I grew up in a home where we had

chores and there was no such thing as allowance. Chores were a 'get to do' task. Since our parents provided us with food and shelter, we 'got to' do the dishes and clean the house, do laundry, fold clothes, clean the yard, etc. We seriously believed that our mom would lay awake at night thinking up things for us to do. As both our parents had to work to make ends meet, our fun family outings were considered our allowance. If you really think about it, chores are a service to our parents. It is showing gratitude for their hard work and sleepless nights in seeing that we are well taken care of. We don't have to serve. We 'get to' serve.

I remember coming home quite a few times only to see a stranger or two sitting at the dinner table. These so-called strangers were often BYU-students, just like you (Caucasian, Samoan, Hawaiian, you name it) who came here for school, their housing fell through so they didn't have a place to stay. My mom, who was the secretary for what was then called, the Education division here at BYU–Hawaii, would come across these students when they came through her office; they would start conversing and before they knew it, she was taking them under her wings. My mother was very nice, until you took advantage of her. She was not an enabler. These students would be welcome in our home, but she also made it very clear that they had two weeks to find a job and place to live and once that happened, they needed to be on their way. My Dad would often buy lunch or dinner for a random stranger, or anonymously pay for a random family's meal at a restaurant in addition to the already large bill he had to foot for us. It was second nature for our parents to do random acts of kindness. My siblings and I have witnessed our parents serving and touching the lives of so many. Although our parents have passed away, I will be forever grateful for the great legacy they left for my brothers and sisters and I to cherish and pattern our lives after.

Albert Schweitzer once told a graduating class:

“I don’t know where you are going or what you will do, but let me tell you this...unless you set aside some portion of your lives to serve those less fortunate than yourselves, you will really not be happy.”

Now, let’s move on to HUMILITY:

Back in the late 80’s, early 90’s I was living in Salt Lake City, UT and had a full-time job in Orem working for a dear friend, Jerry Jackman, who is an LDS Music Publisher. I was having car trouble one morning and asked my roommate to drop me off at the bus stop at Temple Square which she was glad to do. I quickly put on my shoes and hurried to the car. She dropped me off by a curb on the corner of North Temple. I thanked her for the ride and opened the passenger door. When I stepped out of the car and on to the dew kissed blades of grass my shoes had sunk a little in the moist, mushy ground because it had rained the night before. We both said our goodbyes and she offered to pick me up at the same corner that evening. I was very grateful.

I walked a few feet to the bus stop and the only available seat was next to a homeless man whose countenance was all but appealing. It appeared to me that he hadn’t combed his hair for weeks and he looked like he hadn’t had a bath for quite a while. When I approached him, he smiled at me and nodded a quiet hello. I smiled back and quickly sat down. A few seconds later I could smell a very disgusting odor, it smelled like dog poop and of course my thoughts on the stench was directed toward the homeless man. I kept looking at him and he kept smiling. I then started to scoot in the opposite direction as to avoid the smell. However, I noticed that moving away didn’t do the trick. So, I kept staring at him in disgust and he continued to smile. I was getting kind of irritated until I saw him looking down at the trail of dog poop on the concrete walkway that led directly to me. I looked down at my shoes and had a flashback to when I had stepped out of the car on to what I

had thought was mud, but I was wrong. I was soooooo wrong and extremely humbled. I looked back at the homeless man and quietly said "I'm sorry." He again smiled and nodded his head in complete forgiveness. I quickly ran across the street to the water fountain and washed away the ‘stench of shame!’ Shortly after the bus had arrived, I searched for my now homeless friend, but he was nowhere to be seen.

I believe that Heavenly Father places souls in our path to remind us that we are all in the same boat regardless of our color or financial status, whether we have shelter over our heads or not. We all need each other, especially when life stinks! I was so quick to judge that morning, but just as quickly, I was forgiven by this humble soul.

And now we’re on to the conclusion of the three points that I was compelled to share with you today, and that is HARMONY:

Ok, everyone repeat after me... “I is kind, I is smart, I is important.” Now turn to your neighbor and give each other a high five!

February 10 marks my 27 year as an employee here at BYU-Hawaii. I worked in HR for 20 years, and for the past 7 years as the Administrative Assistant for the School of Education, currently known as Teacher Education Programs and before I continue, let me give a shout out to my work Ohana (you know who you are) all of which have made, and continue to make my work experiences fun and enlightening.

I've been through a handful of President's and vice presidents; I've been through quite a few academic calendars and program changes. I've seen both good and not so good occurrences involving 'change'. Nonetheless, in time I've learned to embrace it.

One of my (many) pet peeves is when pedestrians take their sweet time on the crosswalk, texting and chatting on their phone. I sit in the car rolling my eyes and saying "really people?!" I find myself revving the engine, staring them down, and thinking not so good thoughts. My heart starts to race and I'm sitting there imagining myself (just like in the movies) following through on my negative thoughts. One day I made a choice to be patient, and if you know me well, you'll know...It takes a miracle! On that morning, I prayed to Heavenly Father and literally asked for 'more patience'. Bad idea! I have never in my life encountered so many challenges in one day. I was tested to the hilt on the very virtue that I had prayed for. I could only imagine Heavenly Father shaking his head saying, "You asked for it, girl!" Regardless of the challenges, on this particular day I decided that no matter what I was going to be nice, pardon others faults, blah, blah, blah. I also made a choice to be patient while waiting at the cross walk for God's children to cross the street as they texted and chatted on their phones. As I sat there watching, and consciously making an effort to be empathetic and compassionate (believe me, it took every fiber of my being) I noticed my heart wasn't racing and I felt calm.

Things were ok. When we remove our expectations of how our brothers and sisters should be – everything changes. When we choose to sing, and play the harmony melody, we choose to let God be the Mistral of our symphony. We choose to make our opus, His.

I grew up in a home filled with music. Both my parents played musical instruments by ear, and those gifts were passed on to us. Growing up in our household, my siblings and I recall lying in bed at night in complete silence, then all of a sudden we start to hear the strumming of ukulele and guitar coming from the living room then only seconds later to hear our mom and dad singing the original version of the Hawaiian wedding song, and other melodic tunes that we have come

to treasure. Our father always encouraged us to share our talents, while our mother also encouraged us to share our talents, OR ELSE!

In a few moments, we're all going to be one gigantic choir as we all join my Musical Truth ohana in singing a couple simple arrangements of familiar hymns and primary songs. We will also be favored by two original compositions - one of them being a song composed by my niece, Kauai Sika who passed away in 2009 at the age of 29. The song is titled "To You, from Me" which she had written for a friend's mission farewell a few years back.

Our goal this very moment is to become ONE; even if it's just for a few minutes. It's important for each of us to know that our Heavenly Father loves us, and for some of us in this room who may be going through difficulty and challenges more than others - may you find peace in Christ. May you receive answers to your prayers through the musical messages you will be singing and listening to. Allow him to speak to your heart and calm you. Be still, and know that God is working behind the scenes this very moment, tending to your spiritual, emotional, and temporal needs. He sees our path far better and clearer than we do. You cannot go wrong by putting your full trust in He who created you. It is my prayer that the words that are sung today will help us all to improve ourselves, to be kind to others, to love, to forgive, and most important to strengthen our relationship with our Heavenly Father and His only begotten Son, even our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

“Harmony is the Only Melody We Should Sing”

Harmony is the only melody we should sing; when parts become one it gives a heavenly ring. Attitude for good, or attitude for bad will sing a song happy or sing a song sad.

We all love tunes that invigorate the soul, and when parts are sung well our souls on a roll. “Practice makes perfect” is a popular hit; It takes a lifetime to learn, but persistence never quits.

In God's ensemble, everyone's a star, but if you insist on flying solo, you won't get very far. Harmony is oneness, and requires some drilling, but once it's sung, the melody's thrilling.

Song:

1-Teach Me/ We'll Bring: Choir/Congregation

2- Courage: Solo/Choir

3- To You, From Me: Trio Sika Brothers

5- I am A Child of God: Choir

Guidance needed to succeed in all aspects. I hope that each of you will leave this devotional knowing that you are somebody. Knowing that you matter to your creator. May we all continue to strive to serve each other freely and willingly; be humble and submissive to the spirit; be in harmony one with another despite our differences; and most important to live worthy of the blessings we so deserve – Now once again, repeat after me. I is kind, I is smart, I is important! And the most important phrase of all...” I am a Child of God.” In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Courage

Words & Music by J. Kanahele

Sung by Kira TaiHook & Musical Truth

To You, From Me

Words & Music by Kauai Sika

Sung by: Kawehi Sika, Braden Sika, and Malosi Te’