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Reaching for Our Potential

in the Lord's Way

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Reaching Our Potential in the Lord's Way

TONY R. MARTINEZ

As to my strength I am weak; . . . but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things" (Alma 26:12). I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today. I pray that we can both speak and listen by the Spirit, that we may all be edified. I love being part of BYU, and I really believe that we have the potential to bless our fellowman and build the kingdom of God if we can learn to accomplish our duties in the Lord's way.

Although computers are in their technological infancy, they are improving at an astonishing rate. The world's fastest computers can currently accomplish 300,000,000,000 operations every second. In my research area of neural networks and machine learning, we are seeking mechanisms whereby computers can learn on their own without the need of a programmer. This often leads to the question "Can a computer have human intelligence?"

Let us explore a specific case to help discuss this question. Could we build a machine that would appear and act in every way just like LaVell Edwards? We would like it to be sufficiently convincing so that, without the aid of inspiration, a person would not be able to tell the two apart by

observing them over time. I suggest that we will eventually be able to do so. Current technology is much too primitive, but we could eventually build a robot that would have the same physical appearance. However, could we make it act like Coach Edwards? That would require that we observe how he reacts to many types of situations and then train the robot to do the same. Of course, he does not always react the same way each time he is placed in a similar situation. For example, we might observe that while coaching BYU football games he remains relatively calm for the first five or six questionable calls made by the referees. However, on occasion he tends to respond with unusual vigor after an especially creative call. The robot would learn to mimic this behavior by appearing calm the majority of the time, reacting more vigorously on occasion, with the robot's decision being based on a random statistical process. While Sister Edwards might find the creation of many copies of LaVell Edwards somewhat disconcerting, they could at least solve the problem of

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filling all the seats during games at the stadium.

But we have not yet answered the original question of whether the machine could have human intelligence. Although I believe a machine could mimic human behavior, I do not believe a machine can attain to full human intelligence. This claim requires us to examine the meaning of intelligence. Although only partially revealed, the scriptures give important insights on the attributes of intelligence. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, “Intelligence . . . was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). Quoted less often are the following verses, which state, “All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man” (D&C 93:30–31). Thus, another of the attributes of intelligence is agency. The concept that there is no existence without the ability to act independently suggests that agency is a necessary attribute of any living intelligent being.

We do not understand how it is that intelligence can actually make independent decisions. Although we can make machines unpredictable and appear to make choices, all machine decisions are ultimately programmed or controlled by an outside source. It would appear that agency is at the root of some important human attributes that can only be mimicked by a machine—in particular, human emotions, such as love, hate, happiness, and sorrow. Our loving Father has placed us in an environment of many choices, allowing us to exercise our agency, which gives us the opportunity to progress in godly attributes and attain true happiness. As Lehi taught, “Men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Machine learning is based on capturing, analyzing, and generalizing facts and examples. This is also a common method in human learning. How might the Lord’s methods of learning include agency and go beyond these techniques? Let us examine one of Nephi’s great learning experiences and liken it unto ourselves.

After Nephi was taught by his father Lehi concerning Lehi’s dream about the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8), Nephi was not content to have only the explanation from his father. He said, “I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (1 Nephi 10:17; see 1 Nephi 10:17–19). As he sat pondering, he was caught away and experienced a wonderful vision (see 1 Nephi 11–14).

Now contrast the reaction of Laman and Lemuel after hearing their father’s same words. We tend to mercilessly pick on Laman and Lemuel, usually forgetting that our own reactions to situations are often more similar to theirs than to Nephi’s. The scripture states that Laman and Lemuel “were disputing one with another concerning the things which [their] father had spoken unto them” (1 Nephi 15:2). This is a common and highly regarded approach to learning. They were arguing, discussing, and analyzing the words of Lehi, perhaps much like we do when studying a written work.

This is the situation Nephi finds his brothers in as he returns from his vision. His brothers then tell Nephi, “Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive-tree, and also concerning the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 15:7). These are legitimate and interesting questions. Having just seen the whole vision, Nephi is a top expert on the subject. Surely this would be a prime moment for Nephi to pull out his chalkboard and give a stirring and detailed

treatise on the topic. Instead, his initial response to their question is, “Have ye inquired of the Lord?” (1 Nephi 15:8).

Why does Nephi take this approach? Nephi states that Lehi spoke “many . . . things . . . which were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord” (1 Nephi 15:3). Nephi knew that spiritual knowledge can only be fully understood and believed with conviction when taught by the Spirit (see D&C 50:17–24).

May I suggest another reason for Nephi’s approach. Assume that Laman and Lemuel had taken Nephi’s advice and sought understanding by inquiring of the Lord. Think what it would take for you to learn a doctrine by “inquiring of the Lord.” This would require diligent study combined with prayer and faith. Prayer coupled with faith always leads to self-examination and repentance. Could we pray with real faith for the Lord to teach us a principle if we were not striving to keep the commandments? We would first need to get our lives in order. The Lord does not require perfection in order to enjoy his Spirit, but we must be striving to keep his commandments. If Laman and Lemuel had truly sought to learn from the Lord, they first would have had to humble themselves, repent, and sincerely follow his commandments. Then the Spirit could aid them in understanding their questions—but of much greater value would be the change in their lives and characters brought on by the obedience and effort put forth to prepare themselves to learn by the Spirit.

Sadly, the response of Laman and Lemuel is one often heard from members of the Church. To Nephi’s question “Have ye inquired of the Lord,” they respond, “We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us” (1 Nephi 15:9). Nephi’s response is frank and to the point:

How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts?

Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you. [1 Nephi 15:10–11]

I remember the first time that I really recognized the Spirit teaching me a principle. I was on my mission and had been trying to understand a particular passage in the epistle to the Hebrews. I had been pondering it for a few days. While reading before going to sleep one night, I suddenly felt knowledge and intelligence flowing into me. It lasted about twenty seconds, and I was filled with joy. I remember getting up afterward and dancing around the room for a few minutes. Although the knowledge of the particular doctrine was nice, the real joy of the experience was feeling the love and the Spirit of the Lord with me. Each time we feel the Spirit in our lives, we are changed somewhat for the better. The Holy Ghost is not only a revelator but is also a sanctifier (see Alma 13:12). As Paul taught the Galatians, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness” (Galatians 5:22). Each time the Spirit is with us, we become a little more like the Savior as we increase in the attributes of godliness. We become a little kinder, a little more patient and forgiving, a little more willing to bless our fellowman, a little happier. To me, this is the greatest blessing that comes from seeking to learn in the Lord’s way.

This might also help us to understand the Savior’s commandment for us to search and diligently study the words of Isaiah. This is not yet a favorite pastime for most people. It is possible for us to read some

parts of the scriptures while not exercising faith to have the Spirit aid our learning and really think that we understand the passage. This does not happen with Isaiah. The only way to understand his words is to have the Spirit reveal their true meanings. I like to think of reading Isaiah as a type of “spiritual aerobics.” To understand Isaiah we must be striving to keep the commandments, we must humbly pray for the Lord’s inspiration while reading, and we must then be guided by the Holy Ghost in our understanding. This type of experience causes one to love reading Isaiah. Although there are wonderful doctrinal insights that can be gained through the reading, the greatest joy and benefit is in the faithful effort itself, followed by the opportunity to feel the Spirit of the Lord bless you and change you in those moments of inspired insight. Proper reading of Isaiah teaches us how all scripture should be studied. This approach to reading scripture is harder than a purely intellectual study. It still requires the same intellectual effort while also requiring us to exercise faith and keep the commandments—but the results are so much better.

Should similar methods of spiritual growth be part of our normal day-to-day activities? Alma commanded:

Cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord. . . .

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good. [Alma 37:36–37]

Amulek taught, “Cry unto [the Lord] over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them. Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase” (Alma 34:24–25). I testify that the Lord does bless us in all that we put our hands to, to the extent that we obey and humbly seek his guidance and support.

However, we must examine carefully the expectations in these promises, lest we fall

into shallow and false assumptions. To better understand how to progress in the Lord’s way in our daily activities, let us explore an example that many of us are deeply involved in—that of being students, faculty, and employees of Brigham Young University. Although I will use some examples concerning BYU, we can incorporate the concepts we discuss into situations that we all face in daily life.

The Lord, through the prophets, has given tremendous prophecies about the potential and destiny of BYU. President Harold B. Lee stated:

Brigham Young University . . . must never forget its role in bringing to reality the ancient prophecy—to build the mountain of the Lord’s house in the tops of the mountains, so great and so glorious that all nations may come to this place and be constrained to say “show us your way that we may walk therein.” (See Isaiah 2:3.) [Harold B. Lee, “Installation and Charge to the President,” *Inaugural Addresses*, Brigham Young University, 12 November 1971, p. 12]

These prophecies can be heady stuff, causing some to falsely assume that just by being here we will fulfill BYU’s destiny as an “educational Everest” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Second Century Address and Dedication of Carillon Tower and Bells,” Brigham Young University, 10 October 1975, p. 1).

The Lord has promised blessings whenever we follow his commandments. A common mistake we make is to assume that we know best what those blessings should be and when they should come. We must remember the Lord’s words:

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. [Isaiah 55:8–9]

I am thankful that the blessings we receive for obedience come from a Father who knows us completely and loves us perfectly. Our Father knows our needs and will bless us with that which will bring the greatest growth and happiness.

We must also examine our motives. For example, as one portion of their stewardship, BYU faculty should want to do quality research and be respected and influential in their fields. However, if our primary motives for desiring success are to obtain worldly goods or the honors of men, then we would expect a wise and loving Father to withhold his aid in these endeavors and perhaps bless us with opportunities that could increase our humility and reliance. On the other hand, if our real intent is to use whatever influence the Lord blesses us with to build the kingdom and bless our fellowman, then we might expect the Lord to pour out a greater portion of his blessings on our efforts. The light that we hold up must be the light of the Savior, not our own (see 3 Nephi 18:16, 24).

Assuming our motives are appropriate, how could BYU help fulfill John Taylor's prophecy that "Zion will be as far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind as we are to-day in regard to religious matters" (*JD* 21:100)? One might suggest that we could accomplish this by using the same methods used by the world and just working at it harder. However, depending solely on our own intellectual prowess, why would we expect to be more effective than anyone else? Do we have more hours in the day? In fact, we may have somewhat less. On average, BYU students and faculty have time-consuming Church responsibilities, do not pursue secular activities on the Sabbath, and have larger families at a younger age than comparable colleagues at other institutions. I believe if our complete pattern is that of the world,

we will be hard-pressed to even be on par with the best universities, much less become a light to them. Fulfillment of these prophecies will require the blessings of the Lord that only come when we do things the Lord's way.

Yet we often put so much trust in man's ways and have such a desire to be accepted by the world that we are reticent to make any attempts that do not fall in exact step with the wisdom of the world. If we would only realize how little we really know. As a scientist, it never ceases to amaze me how much credence people put in the latest scientific theories. For thousands of years we have put forth scientific theories, assuming they were correct, only later to find out we were wrong. You would think we would start to see the pattern and put less confidence in man's postulations. Yet we seem to put uncanny faith in each new theory, whether it regards the latest fad diet or the creation of the universe.

Martin Harris desperately desired to ratify the truth of the Book of Mormon to others by obtaining the world's stamp of approval on Joseph Smith's translation. After the loss of the manuscript, the Lord chastised Joseph, saying:

How oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men.

For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God. Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words—

Yet you should have been faithful; and he would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble. [D&C 3:6–8]

The Savior stated, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"

(Matthew 6:33). All of our efforts must first be founded in a diligent striving to follow the Redeemer. I spoke earlier about Nephi’s teachings on the Lord’s way of learning. It requires obedience and revelation to obtain learning, with the greatest benefit coming in the change of character during the process rather than in the specific facts learned. Think of the school courses you took previous to the last few years. How much of the detail do you remember now? Do you still remember all the dates from your history classes or the formulas from your math and science courses? If you are like most of us, you have forgotten the majority of these details. So was your effort a waste of time? No. First, you did gain a better perspective of the area you studied even after forgetting most of the details. More important, your character improved as you learned important traits and skills such as concentration, self-discipline, and the need to work hard in order to understand.

By learning in the Lord’s way, we not only gain these types of learning traits but we grow in all essential character attributes including those of greatest importance—such as faith, hope, and charity. To be a positive influence in the world, we must know the secular facts, but the most important influence we will have on others will be a result of the type of people we are. If we follow the Lord’s way, growth in character and knowledge will not only happen in the university classroom but throughout our lives in the classrooms of work, social interaction, church and community service, and, to its greatest extent, in the classroom of raising a family.

One might conjecture that even if we did all of our learning in the way of the world, given sufficient time we would eventually converge on the truth. However, in many important areas the world is actually diverging from the truth. The importance of learn-

ing character in our educational process is an example of this. In the past it was well accepted that learning character was a critical, if not the most important, part of education. Plato stated 2,400 years ago, “Education in virtue is the only education which deserves the name” (Plato, *Laws*, 643–44). David O. McKay said, “Character is the aim of true education; and science, history, and literature are but means used to accomplish [this] desired end” (*GI*, pp. 440–41). Yet as the world denies God and the existence of absolute moral truths, it educates in an ever more sterile way, concentrating on abstract and often false knowledge, leaving character and morals as relative issues to be considered elsewhere. The world’s model comes ever closer to the machine learning model—data devoid of growth and character. Although the secular knowledge you learn here is useful and interesting, it is transient. We will not discover truths here that are not already well-known in heaven, and the actual experience of learning and growing in character will have greater import to you in this life and will continue with you in eternity.

Let us explore an example of what can happen when we obtain knowledge without morals. Assume that every person in the world was given a small black box with a single red button on it. If anyone pushes their button, the world is destroyed. How long do you think the world would last? A few minutes? A few seconds? A button would soon be pushed due to many possibilities: accident, fanaticism, ignorance, hate, etc. Throughout the world’s history there have been many who would have liked to destroy the world, but they never had the power or capacity to do so. As technology increases at a tremendous pace, the ability for a single person to destroy the world gets closer. Today’s technological weaponry is still trivial, yet even now the ability to destroy the world as we know it does rest

in the hands of a few. As breakthroughs continue in such sciences as genetics, nuclear power, and bacterial toxins, the ability for a single motivated person to destroy the world increases. Preventive measures to dangerous technology always lag far behind initial discovery and production due to economic and scientific factors. In other words, technological advances are placing the little black box in each person's hands. It is difficult for me to see how, without divine intervention, the world as we know it could continue, given another 50 years of the current technology explosion.

Is this problem due to inherent evil in the technology? The prophets have taught that technology breakthroughs have been inspired by the Light of Christ to aid in the restoration of the gospel and in the coming millennial work. The problem is that our technological power is growing faster than our moral righteousness. Only a Zion society can handle great power and knowledge. Of course we know that the Lord will come and that only those living a higher law will be permitted to remain on this earth and participate in greater powers, knowledge, and blessings during the millennial era. Speaking of us, the Lord revealed:

Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, . . . they do not learn this one lesson—

That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. [D&C 121:35–36]

Seeking greater power and knowledge without a foundation of righteousness must ultimately fail. Might I suggest then that the proper relationship between secular and spiritual learning is not coequal, but that secular education must sit atop the broad

shoulders of spiritual education. Without a spiritual and moral foundation, secular learning might be likened unto “a great and spacious building [standing] in the air, high above the earth” (1 Nephi 8:26). And as the angel said concerning it, “Behold the world and the wisdom thereof,” and with no foundation under it, “the fall thereof [will be] exceedingly great” (1 Nephi 11:35, 36). Spencer W. Kimball stated, “The secular without the foundation of the spiritual is but like the foam upon the milk, the fleeting shadow” (*TSWK*, p. 390).

But what is the right balance between our own efforts and the Lord's blessings and help in our efforts? First, I suggest that “balance” may not be the appropriate word here. For example, we should never try to find a “balance” between obedience to our covenants and success in the world. We should never try to find a “balance” between following the Spirit and following our own directions. The Lord, in his wisdom, or because of our lack of faith and diligence, may withhold his guiding Spirit, leaving us to use our best judgment—but we should always seek to have his Spirit with us and follow all guidance received. However, concern arises when one seeks to excuse lack of work and effort on the basis that the Lord will provide, when that person “took no thought save it [were] to ask” (D&C 9:7). The Spirit of the Lord leads us into every good thing. It will not influence us to be idle or lazy. The Spirit will motivate us to work hard at all our righteous endeavors. We will not be able to approach the Lord in faith to bless us in our temporal or spiritual affairs if we are not doing our part. But if we are striving to obey the commandments, while working hard to achieve our goals, “then shall [our] confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45).

Perhaps of even greater concern is the other end of the spectrum—when one

depends only on one's own strength. Some may even use their goal of success as an excuse to rationalize lack of faith and obedience. Just as "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26), works without faith can never bring us to a fullness. The Lord's way is truly more demanding, as it requires faith and diligence combined with hard work. And yet it is the most joyous, leading to an outpouring of the Lord's blessings.

Let us return to the BYU example to explore this concept more carefully. Assume the case of a student or professor trying to assimilate or discover new knowledge. Joseph Smith said, "The best way to obtain truth and wisdom is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer, and obtain divine teaching" (*Teachings*, p. 191). Does he suggest then, that we should not read? Certainly not. The Lord commanded through Joseph, "Seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). Although the best way to learn is through revelation, we will not receive inspiration if we have not studied it out in our minds (see D&C 9:8). The Lord promises knowledge to those who obey. This obedience includes our diligent study and thought—which is a necessary condition, although by itself it is not sufficient, for learning by the Spirit. The Lord stated, "Those who fear me, and . . . serve me in righteousness . . . to them will I reveal all mysteries, . . . even the wonders of eternity. . . . Their understanding [shall] reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish. . . . For by my Spirit will I enlighten them" (D&C 76:5–10). The scriptures also promise, "He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he . . . knoweth all things" (D&C 93:28). The Lord has given us his formula for learning. If we leave out either study or faith from that formula, we will not succeed. In my scientific research I have had the opportunity to feel

the peaceful Spirit of the Comforter enlighten my mind with ideas and approaches. These moments bring the same joy and growth as do similar experiences when studying gospel knowledge from the scriptures.

Joseph Fielding Smith stated:

*There has never been a step taken . . . in discovery or invention, where the Spirit of the Lord (that is, . . . the Light of Christ . . .) was not the prevailing force, resting upon the individual, which caused him to make the discovery or the invention. . . . [The Lord] uses such minds as are pliable . . . to accomplish his work, whether they believe in him or not. [Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), p. 178]*

We might ask, why doesn't the Lord reveal more of these discoveries to members of the Church? If we have not prepared our minds and are not actively searching at the bounds of our current limited knowledge, then our minds will not be open to assimilate new truths. Could the Lord inspire us with the insight to a dramatic breakthrough in physics if we did not have the mathematical and physics background? We would not be able to understand or appreciate the inspiration, nor be able to communicate it to others. However, if we prepare our minds and have the crucial added blessing of the gift of the Holy Ghost, might not the Lord begin to reveal more of these discoveries meant to benefit the kingdom through those in the kingdom?

The conclusion of the matter then is to keep the commandments of God. Obedience is the "whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Perhaps we feel that we are already obeying sufficiently. Joseph Smith taught that Satan seeks to "retard the human mind, and hinder our progress, by filling us with self-righteousness" (*Teachings*, p. 241).

Let us liken unto ourselves the story of the 2,000 sons of Helaman. Remember the miracle that not a single one of these young Lamanites was killed in their battles. However, think about the Nephite armies that battled alongside those sons of Helaman. After the battles Helaman states, “Now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should be spared while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain” (Alma 57:26). Many of these Nephite warriors were also righteous. They prayed for deliverance (see Alma 58:10–11). They courageously defended the families of the 2,000 and were willing to give their own lives to assure the safety of the 2,000 (see Alma 56:37–38, 50–51). Helaman continues, “And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their *exceeding* faith” (Alma 57:26; emphasis added). Helaman gives insight as to why the faith of the 2,000 may have exceeded that of their Nephite comrades. He states, “They were . . . true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted” (Alma 53:20). “Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness” (Alma 57:21). It appears that the 2,000 had taken their obedience to a higher level and that this obedience and subsequent faith had led to a significant increase in the Lord’s blessings in their lives.

In speaking of attaining excellence in spiritual and scholarly efforts at BYU, Neal A. Maxwell stated, “Such outcomes only occur, . . . when there is commitment bordering on consecration” (“Discipleship and Scholarship,” *BYU Studies* 32, no. 3 [1992], p. 7). It is often our nature to obey in part, but in our pride we hold on to seemingly innocent sins that we do not want to give up. I believe that if we will truly humble ourselves, with our hearts broken and our spirits contrite, and strive to perform every word of command with exactness, we will

begin to experience an outpouring of blessings far beyond what we have known. Although we must patiently “wait on the Lord,” blessings at BYU should include power in learning and teaching, inspiration in study and research, the Lord preparing quality students and faculty to come to BYU, the softening of hearts in efforts at funding and collaboration, and, most important, obedient students and faculty attaining to Christlike character and love that will influence and bless all they come in contact with.

We have another opportunity at BYU to receive blessings that was also part of the experience of Helaman’s 2,000 sons—that of unity. The scriptures repeatedly show that hearts unified in a desire to obey and build the kingdom bring down tremendous blessings. Not only were the 2,000 as one in their efforts to obey, but they benefited from the unified prayers of their faithful mothers and families. While the 2,000 were being miraculously blessed, the Book of Mormon explains that the difficulties experienced by the Nephites were brought on because of pride, contention, and dissensions amongst them. To enjoy a full outpouring of God’s blessings at BYU, we must be united in our motives to build the kingdom, to love and help one another, and to follow our Savior. We must obey the Lord’s command, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27).

May I stress the commandment to be humble and rely on the Lord. We know so little. If we could only realize how much we can attain to if we will follow the Savior and not trust in our own strength. Our Father wants us to learn and grow, and yet, sadly, it is our nature to become prideful as soon as we learn a little bit. When I was young, I read two teachings of Jacob that struck me forcefully and that continue to do so. First:

The wise, and the learned, . . . who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, . . . they are they whom [the Lord] despiseth; and save they shall . . . consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them. [2 Nephi 9:42]

And second:

O . . . the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God. [2 Nephi 9:28–29]

As we humble ourselves before God, he will make our weaknesses known to us and give us strength to overcome them (see Ether 12:27). We must acknowledge “his hand in all things” (D&C 59:21) and give thanks for all of his blessings. The Lord promised, “He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious” (D&C 78:19).

In the earlier example of trying to build a machine with human intelligence, we saw that agency is a crucial aspect that sets us apart from machines. Our Heavenly Father understands the principles of happiness and desires that we learn them. To help us learn these principles, he asks us to appropriately

use our agency and give to him the one thing that is truly ours—our will. When we submit our will to his, putting off the natural man, and live by the creed “not my will, but thine be done,” then a miracle occurs in our lives. Our desires and nature begin to change as we begin to understand the truth and experience the happiness that comes from keeping God’s commandments. Eventually our nature will become one with God’s, and we will no longer need to bend our will to follow his because ours will be one with his.

I testify to you that God lives and loves all of his children. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that he stands at the head of his earthly kingdom and speaks through his anointed prophet. Jesus said:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. [D&C 78:17–18]

I pray that we will follow the gentle lead of our Redeemer. I testify that if we humbly submit to the Lord, diligently obeying his will, that we will be blessed in all we do and have “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). I leave this witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.