

D. Bryce Baker
11-13-2015 Luncheon Remarks

To the members of the advisory board, the MPA Program faculty (active and retired) and MPA students, thank you for the honor of having my career recognized. I am grateful to BYU and specifically the MPA program. I received my MPA degree in 1983, over 32 years ago, but I remember well the experience of being a MPA student. I remember those who taught and prepared me: Lennis Knighton, Stewart Grow, Bill Timmins, Dale Wright, Gary Cornia, Dee Henderson, Karl Snow, Doyle Buckwalter, Neil Brady, and others. I am grateful for them.

There is a lot of debate in the political arena about big government versus small government. That debate is not going away any time soon. It is an interesting and important debate that will ultimately be resolved by our elected political leaders.

As a professional civil servant, my role is to promote **good** government. Whatever the size of government, whatever missions it assumes—the challenge for civil servants is to be efficient and effective in accomplishing their assigned missions. Each civil servant can have an impact on good government within his or her sphere of influence.

My primary sphere of influence is in the Pay and Leave policy office within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (or OPM), the Federal Government's central management agency for human resources. The Pay and Leave policy office is responsible for Governmentwide policies and programs related to Federal civilian employee compensation, leave, and work schedules that apply to over 1.5 million employees. I currently serve as the senior policy advisor to the senior executive in charge of the Pay and Leave policy office.

The compensation policy function has existed in OPM and its predecessor organization, the Civil Service Commission, going back to at least the 1920s. Yes, the compensation policy function has changed (and expanded) over time, and has been housed in different organizations under different names, but, as far as I can determine, it has kept a consistent reputation of excellence

for decades. I may be a bit biased, but I think our policy office is an exemplary organization. Over the years, we have received feedback from our agency's political leadership (of either party) that our office is the role model for all the other policy offices in the agency. We have a reputation for knowing our stuff, providing solid analyses of the issues, preparing high quality written products, responding to deadlines in a timely way, reacting quickly to unplanned contingencies, finding solutions to problems, representing OPM well to outsiders, and showing leadership. That reputation has spread beyond OPM—our services and expertise are valued by other agencies, by OMB and White House staff, GAO, and by Congressional staff.

In our office, a general characteristic of the leaders and the staff is that they care deeply about the work. The mission matters. We can be passionate about it. Yes, passionate about pay and leave policy. The policies and programs we administer are important to Federal employees and thus our work supports all the important missions of the Government.

In our office, there is a commitment to do the right thing. Employees are involved and engaged. We have pride in our work products. We demand excellence of ourselves. We refuse to surrender to cynicism. We accept what we cannot control, and keep trying to influence policy going forward. We challenge each other and sometimes engage in passionate debate. All sides are heard and considered. When a policy decision is made (by Congress, the President, or our agency leaders), we do our best to make it work.

When I spoke to the MPA students yesterday, I tried to share information about what it means to be a “policy wonk”—a person who specializes in policy work. Policy work is a distinct field. It cuts across all other fields.

In a large organization, you end up developing a lot of policies to manage the work and the people. Big organizations are dealing with complexity, and complexity drives policy specialization.

If you want good Government, you need good policies—policies related to the external mission, and internal policies that support that mission (such as HR policies). You need employees that know how to analyze, develop, and

implement policy. Policy professionals need to be trained and developed. It is a rigorous discipline that involves a systematic approach.

There are generic **skills** that are needed—skills involving research, logic, quantitative analysis, communication (oral and written), negotiation, legal knowledge, political savvy, creativity, and problem solving. (In the Federal Government context, there are additional skills dealing with drafting and analyzing legislation and regulations.)

There are generic **factors** that need to be considered in developing policy: the need for change, impact on mission, equity, consistency, costs, administrative burden, complexity, flexibility, litigative risks, and political factors.

There is a deliberative policy **process** that involves research (legal, data), identification and documentation of problems, scoping out of the issues, analysis of options with pros and cons (including costs), consideration of stakeholder views, and making recommendations after weighing of all relevant factors.

You need leaders (decision makers) who recognize the importance of policy and the importance of getting it right. A wise leader will support those engaged in policy work to dig deep, to question assumptions, to expose the facts and issues that need to be considered, to honestly present the pros and cons of options, etc. so that decisions are made with a full understanding.

I think it is important for the MPA Program to help students to develop policy skills through exposure to real-life policy challenges. They should be studying how organizations have addressed those challenges. I believe policy skills will be valuable no matter where they end up in their career.

When Dr. Facer told me about this luncheon speech, he suggested I might share some thoughts about the principles that guide my public service.

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a doctrine that the temporal and the spiritual are connected—that there is always a spiritual aspect to temporal things (D&C 29:34-35; 1 Nephi 15:32)—that spiritual principles can be applied to our temporal affairs (D&C 77:2). The Lord tells us to ask for

whatsoever things ye stand in need, both temporary and spiritually (Alma 7:23), and promises to bless us both spiritually and temporally (Mosiah 2:41, D&C 14:11).

I thought I might share six **spiritual** principles that have been important to me in my **temporal** career:

1. Magnification

An appointment to the public service is like a calling. It needs to be “magnified” (D&C 84:33). Joseph Smith said this about magnifying a calling:

“What does it mean to magnify a calling? It means to build it up in dignity and importance, to make it honorable and commendable in the eyes of all men, to enlarge and strengthen it, to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men. And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it.” [D&C Student Manual, p. 183]

In a revelation to Joseph Smith, the Lord gave counsel about magnifying a priesthood office saying that every man should “learn his duty” and “act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99). Those spiritual principles apply to public service. During my career, I have seen public servants who truly magnified their role—they enlarged the impact of their organizations, they made the programs they administered honorable and commendable—they were faithful to their assigned duties and accomplished important things—they diligently served. A manager who magnifies his mission in the eyes of his staff will inspire and motivate them.

2. Seeking the Lord’s Help

In the Book of Mormon, Amulek counseled the Zoramites to pray to God “when ye are in your fields . . . over all your flocks . . . over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them . . . over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase” (Alma 34:20-25). I liken this scripture to myself and believe that I can pray about my work and seek the Lord’s help in having success in my work. I have faced difficult work challenges that sent me to

my knees. I know the Lord strengthened me to meet those challenges. At times inspiration came in the middle of the night.

Yes, I believe that God gives grace to bureaucrats.

3. Paying Attention to the Small and Simple Things

The Book of Mormon teaches that by small and simple means great things can be accomplished (Alma 37:6-7). In my work, attention to the details can be very important. The answer to a problem may be found by making the choice to dig a little deeper, to take the extra little step. Small and simple actions that demonstrate a commitment to excellence can accumulate over time and produce a reputation that puts you in a position of trust and respect that allows you to do something more significant. (1 Nephi 16:29, D&C 64:33.)

4. Overcoming Setbacks and Obstacles

Nephi experienced two failures before he obtained the brass plates. (1 Nephi 3-4.) If you think about it carefully, you will see that those failures actually paved the way for success upon the third attempt. In my life, I have learned that failures, dead-ends, or detours can be stepping stones to a better result than our first plans would have achieved. Also, we can learn from our failures things that will make us wiser and more effective in achieving results when we face future challenges.

When Samuel the Lamanite was directed by the Lord to return to the city of Zarahemla after being totally rejected, he obeyed but he was prevented from entering the city. He could have given up, but he didn't. He found another way to accomplish his mission—by climbing upon the wall. He did not quit until he finished his mission. (Helaman 11:4.) It turned out that delivering his message from the wall was probably the most effective way to get attention. But remember he ended up on the wall only when his first approach failed and because he did not give up on his mission. He found another way. He didn't look for excuses to give up. He was bold and courageous.

Public servants will face obstacles and setbacks and they need the kind of determination and courage that Nephi and Samuel possessed to overcome (or

get around) them. They need to recognize that challenging experiences will give experience and can be for your good (D&C 122:7)—that adversity can refine you and increase your effectiveness in the future (Alma 17:11).

5. Being Prepared

In a talk in the Priesthood session of the April 2007 General Conference, Bishop Keith B. McMullin, told a story about a young man who was not prepared to take college seriously. He neglected to attend his chemistry class as regularly as he should and to engage in disciplined study. He failed the final exam. Bishop McMullin then said “Even today . . . I still have nightmares about that chemistry class.” Bishop McMullin learned a life lesson about the importance of hard work and “unrelenting preparation.”

The scriptures repeatedly emphasize the importance of being prepared. We are told:

- that mortality is a time of preparation (Alma 12:24, D&C 78:7);
- that we should “Organize [ourselves]; prepare every needful thing” (D&C 88:119);
- that “if ye are **prepared** ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

In telling the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), Christ described five wise virgins who were prepared with oil in their lamps when the Bridegroom came. Five foolish virgins were unprepared and found themselves shut out of the marriage feast. From one of Joseph Smith’s revelations, we learn that the wise virgins were prepared because they had “taken the Holy Spirit for their guide” (D&C 45:57). In other words, the oil symbolizes the companionship of the Holy Ghost, a blessing of grace that flows from our acts of obedience. President Spencer W. Kimball said: “In our lives the oil of **preparedness** is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living.” He taught that with “each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store.” [Faith Precedes the Miracle, 1972, page 256.]

As public servants, we have the responsibility to be prepared to deal with both the expected and the unexpected. Preparation requires a long-term effort and day-by-day (drop-by-drop) diligence. In my line of work, much of

my workload is unplanned. We may be asked to review legislation with a short deadline or respond to an urgent problem. Without expertise developed over many years, it would be impossible to provide a good work product in the time allotted.

6. Acting with Speed When Necessary

The prophet Alma was rejected by the people of Ammonihah, and finally left in discouragement. Then an angel appeared and directed him to return. We read that he “returned speedily” (Alma 8:10-18). The ability and willingness to act speedily—when necessary—is a great asset for a public servant. (I say “when necessary” since other circumstances may demand patient deliberation. Policies that are developed too quickly may be full of flaws. It’s like basketball. Certain circumstances demand a fast break. Or consider the example of Moses. He had to act quickly to part the Red Sea, but then he led his people around in the wilderness for 40 years in order to achieve his mission. Helping others to grow often requires patience.)

Sometimes in the policy world, if you are not able to act quickly, you will lose control of the agenda. Quick action may be needed to stop a bad idea. Ironically, quick action can sometimes have the effect of slowing down the policy process so that all issues are considered.

Speedy action in challenging circumstances is not the result of a moment’s whim. As a general principle, the ability to act quickly is a function of being prepared—the preceding principle we just discussed. The prepared are ready to act quickly. Alma was spiritually prepared to act immediately when he was directed to return to Ammonihah. He later told Amulek that he had been fasting for many days (Alma 8:26). But his preparation went well beyond that—Alma had built up an abundant reserve of faith over an extended period of time as he diligently served the Lord. He was committed to the Lord and to his assigned mission of spreading the gospel and saving souls. Thus, we can see that the ability to act quickly is also a function of being committed to one’s mission.

I would like to conclude my remarks with the story of a public servant who responded to the call by a political leader to accept a temporal mission. This

public servant was not a formal Government employee but, in performing his public mission, he exemplified some the principles I have shared. The political leader was Brigham Young. The public servant who responded to Brigham Young's call was a man named Ephraim Hanks, one of the early Utah pioneers.

Ephraim Hanks was returning to Salt Lake City after a fishing expedition to Utah Lake in October 1856. On the night of October 24 he heard a voice calling him by name and saying "The handcart people are in trouble and you are wanted; will you go and help them?" Ephraim answered aloud "Yes, I will go if I am called." He then hurried back to Salt Lake City arriving on a Saturday. The next day, Sunday, Brigham Young called for more volunteers to help rescue the Willie and Martin handcart companies that were stranded on the plains, caught in terrible winter storms. (The first group of rescuers had left Salt Lake City on October 7, 1856.) Ephraim heard other men say they needed a few days to get ready. He declared "I am ready now!" He left the next day on October 27, 1856.

Ephraim traveled with urgency, passing rescuers who had left Salt Lake City ahead of him and seeing some who had given up on the rescue mission and turned back due to the extreme cold and deep snow from terrible winter storms. In the meantime, the small group of express rescuers had first reached Martin handcart company on October 28. The company was in terrible straits. Fifty-six had died in the preceding nine days. They were starving and freezing. Many could not walk. The advance team of rescuers had some wagons and provisions but they were insufficient to meet all the needs. They did their best to keep the company moving westward. More died. They expected additional relief wagons to meet them soon and could not understand why other rescuers had not already appeared.

Then, after almost two weeks, late in the day on November 10, a lone man leading two horses approached the camp. It was Ephraim Hanks. He had traveled about 300 miles in 14 days in the midst of terrible winter storms. He brought fresh buffalo meat—miraculously obtained in answer to prayer. Just as important, he brought hope—news that additional rescue wagons were coming. It took another six days before a group of ten rescue wagons arrived with substantial aid, but Ephraim's presence helped bridge the gap and saved

many lives. He not only provided desperately needed food, but also performed amputations of frostbit toes and feet with his hunting knife. He gave numerous priesthood blessings, going tent to tent responding to the pleas of the sick and infirm. Ephraim remained with the Martin handcart company until it arrived in Salt Lake City on November 30, 1856.

There was an 8-year girl named Janet Gourley in the Martin handcart company. She was my great-great grandmother. She later married and had 10 children. Janet lived a long life, dying in 1937 at the age of 89. My mother who was born in 1931 knew her personally.

I am grateful that Ephraim Hanks was ready to act as a public servant and that he let spiritual principles guide his temporal service.

Ephraim Hanks was prepared. He was not deterred by obstacles and setbacks, even when others gave up. He acted speedily. He sought the Lord's help through prayer. He took a series of small steps to achieve a great thing. He magnified his mission in such a way that we remember him 160 years later.

As public servants, we can apply those same spiritual principles and make a positive difference within our sphere of influence. We can produce good government that is honorable and commendable because we have magnified our responsibility.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Let me share a personal story told by Elder D. Todd Christofferson, currently a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles:

Some time before I was called as a General Authority, I faced a personal economic challenge that persisted for several years. It did not come about as a consequence of anyone's wrongdoing or ill will; it was just one of those things that sometimes come into our lives. It ebbed and flowed in seriousness and urgency, but it never went away completely. At times this challenge threatened the welfare of my family and me, and I thought we might be facing financial ruin. I prayed for some miraculous intervention to deliver us. Although I offered that prayer many times with great sincerity and earnest desire, the answer in the end was "No." Finally I learned to pray as the Savior did: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). I sought the Lord's help with each tiny step along the way to a final resolution.

There were times when I had exhausted all my resources, when I had nowhere or no one to turn to at that moment, when there was simply no other human being I could call on to help meet the exigency before me. With no other recourse, more than once I fell down before my Heavenly Father begging in tears for His help. And He did help. Sometimes it was nothing more than a sense of peace, a feeling of assurance that things would work out. I might not see how or what the path would be, but He gave me to know that, directly or indirectly, He would open a way. Circumstances might change, a new and helpful idea might come to mind, some unanticipated income or other resource might appear at just the right time. Somehow there was a resolution.

Though I suffered then, as I look back now, I am grateful that there was not a quick solution to my problem. The fact that I was forced to turn to God for help almost daily over an extended period of years taught me truly how to pray and get answers to prayer and taught me in a very practical way to have faith in God. I came to know my Savior and my Heavenly Father in a way and to a degree that might not have happened otherwise or that might have taken me much longer to achieve. I learned that daily bread is a precious commodity. I learned that manna today can be as real as the physical manna of biblical history. I learned to trust in the Lord with all my heart. I learned to walk with Him day by day. ["Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread," CES Fireside, January 9, 2011.]

Christ is thrifty—wise and prudent in use of temporal resources.

- Turned water into wine. (John 2:1-10)
- Fed 5,000 with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. (Matt. 14:7)
- Fed 4,000 with 7 loaves and a few fish. (Matt. 15:34)
- Told parables that teach about being thrifty:
 - Parable of the talents, which dealt with using money wisely (Matt. 25:14-30;5-2-1)
 - Parable of the pounds - 10 servants, each 1 pound (Luke 19:11-27)
 - Parable of the lost silver coin (if just 1 of 10 lost, sought diligently) (Luke 15:8)
 - Parable of the pearl of great price (wise investment worth selling all to obtain it) (Matt. 13:45)
 - Parable of the lost sheep (went after the 1 lost sheep out of 100) 99% not good enough (Luke 15:4)
 - Parable of building a tower, which instructed the you should first sit down and count the cost of the tower before you begin building it (Luke 14:28)
- Christ noticed and appreciated the poor widow’s mite. (Mark 12:42)
- Christ walked on water rather than rent a boat (Matt. 14:26)
- Finally, when it came time to pay taxes (tribute to the Romans), Christ told Peter to cast a hook into the sea. Peter caught a fish, and inside the fish’s mouth was a coin, with which he paid the taxes. (Matt. 17:27)

Christ was actually focused on the currency of souls.

President Spencer W. Kimball’s words on this subject: “In our lives the oil of **preparedness** is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living. Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps.” [Faith Precedes the Miracle, 1972, page 256]

In our office, we have a variety of people who bring different personalities and skills to the table. I have come to appreciate how the mix of personalities and skills is an asset. In this book, *In Perfect Balance*, Spencer J. Condie explored the tension between godly attributes such as justice and mercy, patience and perfection-seeking, faith and works, boldness and meekness, risk-taking and security-seeking. Br. Condie described how we are faced with making choices between two goods that have tension between them (inherent in the opposition of all things). We need to find the right balance – to learn how one virtue tempers the other so that we can possess both virtues without being extreme. Br. Condie explained how we not only need to seek personal balance, but need to consider collective balance – for example, in marriage, a Church bishopric or presidency. To achieve collective balance within a group to which you belong, you may need to adjust based on other persons’ attitudes and behaviors. Consider this idea of collective balance in the context of a team of people in a work environment. Rather than seek to have people that

are clones in terms of personality and skill, a better collective balance can result when we allow the tension between people who are “big-picture” versus detail-oriented, optimistic versus skeptical, risk-takers versus security seekers, people-focused versus number-focused.

I guess you could say we strive to follow the Golden Rule—we try to treat others as we would like to be treated. I have another name for it –the Boomerang Principle—which is found in Alma 41:15: “that which ye do send out shall return unto you again.” (It is also called the restoration principle.) If you will listen to others, they will listen to you. If you will be open and honest with others, they will be open and honest with you. Treat others with respect, and they will respect you. Yes, there are some people who grab the boomerang and don’t let it come back. But most people respond and return what you send out. Regardless of what others do, I know am a better public servant when I am following Christ and living by his teachings showing patience, diligence, humility, courage, honesty (integrity), love and compassion, forgiveness, turning the other cheek, and not taking offense.

I currently serve as the senior policy advisor to the senior executive in charge of the Pay and Leave policy office. My responsibilities include—

- having a lead role in reviewing and drafting legislation, regulations, and policies;
 - providing technical support in litigation;
 - conducting special studies and preparing official reports;
 - directing teams working on special projects;
 - serving on inter-office or interagency task forces;
 - helping design new pay systems and programs; and
 - representing OPM in dealings with outside parties, including other Federal agencies, the Office of Management and Budget, the White House, the Department of Justice, the Government Accountability Office, and Congressional staff.
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In the Pay and Leave policy office, one generation trains the next to maintain the commitment to excellence through mentoring and modeling. We tend to attract and retain quality employees. In a policy office, it is critical to hold on to staff since policy expertise takes time to develop. It is not just having knowledge about policy matters, it is having the skills to do policy work.

We work cooperatively with other OPM offices and other agencies. We don’t play power games.

The importance of careful analysis is illustrated by my office's recent study of gender pay equality within the Federal Government. The pay gap between men and women in the Federal Government has reduced dramatically over the last 20 years and is smaller than in society in general. For white-collar employees, the gap has dropped from 30 percent 1992 to about 13 percent in 2012. However, there is still a gap. Some might make the assumption that the gap is primarily attributable to discrimination and make policies based on that assumption. We were tasked to analyze the issue. We conducted detailed analyses, including multivariate regressions, and discovered that the primary factor behind the gap was occupational distribution. That finding led to recommended actions that focused on how to better recruit and attract women into higher-paying jobs where they are underrepresented.

My patriarchal blessing speaks of my work and my career—why, unless it has spiritual implications?

Focus remarks on advisory board and professionals in public service, faculty

Vision for successful public service, how to make an impact in improving the governance of public organizations, principles in personal life