

LIGHT REFLECTIONS

Justin Collings

March 2023

Bus Station BYU

When I was young, I knew exactly what I was going to do when I grew up: I would play professional basketball, break Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's (now LeBron James's) all-time scoring record, as well as John Stockton's all-time assists record, and lead the Jazz to our first—indeed, our first ten or twelve—NBA championships.

Amazingly, things didn't quite work out that way. By the time I was in law school, the question of a future career pressed itself upon my thoughts with remorseless insistence. It became a source of frequent nocturnal agony—a thief of tranquility and enemy of sleep. I feared I would land in a job I despised—or perhaps have no job at all.

Over time, my anxieties eased, as Lia and I felt directed to pursue a career in legal academia and, later, a position at BYU. We were grateful and delighted when I received an offer to teach at BYU Law School, but we weren't entirely settled about the prospect of moving (back) to Utah. We had loved living in New England and hoped that we might stay on the East Coast for good. I had grown up in Provo. My parents both taught at BYU. I had been a BYU undergraduate. Hadn't BYU already invested enough in me? Could I really “go forth to serve” if I went back to teach? Some of the people I admired most had made enormous contributions to the country and the Kingdom in places far from Utah Valley. Shouldn't I follow their example?

One of those admired models was the late Clayton Christensen, who served as our area seventy during our years in New England. Elder Christensen was a powerfully influential Harvard business professor and an almost unbelievably effective member missionary. One Sunday, not

long before we moved back to Utah, he and his wife, Christine, visited our ward in Connecticut and spoke in our sacrament meeting. I somehow had the chutzpah to corner him after the meeting and ask him about my troubles.

Elder Christensen enjoyed in an exquisite degree what to me is one of the greatest spiritual gifts. He could communicate, on very short acquaintance, an immense and immediate outpouring of Christlike love. He made me feel as though I were a person of tremendous importance—as though there were nothing on earth he would rather do than listen to my story and help me on my way. He invited me to sit with him on a pew near the pulpit to unfold my concerns.

He listened intently, then responded with what for me is a pearl of priceless wisdom. As near I as I can recall, he said something like this:

In the Church, there are two kinds of wards: destination wards and bus station wards. Christine and I have loved living in a bus station ward. We have loved seeing a steady stream of bright and faithful students pass our way, and we have done our best to punch their ticket and send them off to serve all over the world.

When you go to BYU, you will live in a destination ward. But your classroom and your office can be a bus station for your students. You will be in an amazing position to bless and lift your students, then send them off to bless and lift the world.

These words brought great comfort to a soon-to-be rookie professor; I still see them as a sacred charge. I hope to help make BYU a mighty bus station for every one of our students—one that empowers them on the road toward future

achievement; one that speeds them toward “the full realization of human potential,” “the balanced development of the total person,” and the thrilling “quest for perfection and eternal life.”¹

I am blessed, in that effort, to have so many of you as mentors and models. Over the last three months, I have reviewed scores and scores of rank and status dossiers. I have been blessed and humbled by this rarefied glimpse into the great good that so many of you are doing for the world and for our students. I am in grateful awe to be your colleague.

¹ The Mission of Brigham Young University.

Here at Bus Station BYU, we hope to punch our students’ tickets for a lifetime of service and an eternity of growth. But we also hope to catch a ride of our own on a bus whose destination lies “beyond this vale of sorrow” in “a far better land of promise” (Alma 37:46). We ride toward the prophesied “school in Zion” (D&C 97:3)—“the fully anointed university of the Lord about which so much has been spoken.”²

On we go.

² Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” *BYU Devotional*, October 10, 1975.