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Elder Paul V. Johnson

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## “Lift Where You Stand”: A Conversation with Elder Paul V. Johnson

INTERVIEW BY BARBARA E. MORGAN

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*Elder Paul V. Johnson earned a bachelor’s degree in zoology and a master’s degree in counseling and guidance at Brigham Young University. Upon graduation from BYU, Elder Johnson and his wife, Jill, moved to Chandler, Arizona, where he taught seminary for four years. Following a diagnosis of Crohn’s disease, Elder Johnson and his family returned to his childhood area of Cache Valley, Utah, where he continued to teach seminary. There, he also earned a doctorate in instructional technology from Utah State University.*

*After seven years in Cache Valley, Paul and Jill moved with their children to Salt Lake City, where he has worked in a variety of positions in CES, including curriculum development and administration. He served as the administrator of Religious Education for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion from 2001 to 2007. He was called as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy in 2005, and while serving as a member of the Chile Area Presidency in 2008, Elder Johnson accepted a call from President Thomas S. Monson to serve as the LDS Church’s sixteenth Commissioner of the Church Educational System. After seven years in this assignment to the day, Elder Johnson’s tenure as Commissioner will conclude,*

*and he has accepted the assignment to be the First Counselor in the Europe Area Presidency.*

**Morgan:** *What was your experience in being called as a General Authority and then Commissioner?*

**Johnson:** I was in Cedar City when I got a phone call from President Hinckley's secretary telling me that President Hinckley wanted to meet with me. I replied that I was in Southern Utah but that if I left immediately I could make it back to Salt Lake by 5:00 p.m. His secretary responded that that would not be necessary but told me to plan on coming in the morning instead. I had occasion to talk with President Hinckley in the past regarding the seminary and institute program, and I assumed that he was needing information in this regard. I went home and put together some statistics and other information I thought he might need and went into his office the next morning. It didn't take long before I recognized that this meeting was different than what I had expected. I was the only one in his office, and his questions were about me and about my worthiness. I realized this wasn't just out of curiosity but that there was more to it. This was the beginning of February, and he called me as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and told me I would be sustained at the April general conference.

Being called as the Commissioner was also a surprise. I had been a member of the Area Presidency in Chile for just one year. In April 2008, we were at the annual assignment meeting held in conjunction with April conference. In that meeting all General Authorities and their wives are shown the assignments for the next year. As I expected, it was announced that we would be in the same assignment in Chile for the next year. The typical amount of time in an Area Presidency is three to five years. About three weeks to a month after we arrived back in Chile, during an Area Presidency meeting one of the secretaries came in a little excited and said that President Monson was on the phone and wanted to talk with me. So I went in my office and talked to him. He told me who it was and said they'd been talking about my assignment and me, and they wanted me to come back and become the Commissioner of the Church Educational System. He talked to me for about ten to fifteen minutes. I don't remember all the details, but it was less about specific instructions and more about why they were having me do this. It was a very big surprise. I called my wife after the conversation and told her. We were enjoying our time in Chile, and this call meant changes to our life.

We had thought we had said good-bye to CES forever when I had accepted my new assignment just a year earlier to Chile. We weren't expecting to come back to the United States, let alone CES, so soon. Although I had been with Seminaries and Institutes for a long time, I really had never had an inkling or thought that I was going to end up being the Commissioner. I was quite familiar with the assignment because I had worked in the Church Office Building since 1989. For part of that time I had worked really closely with the Commissioner and with the Commissioner's office especially as the administrator for what we now call Seminaries and Institutes. In that capacity I had reported directly to the Commissioner, and I had met with him frequently and had a lot of connections with him. When Elder Rolfe Kerr was the Commissioner and I was serving as the administrator, he had me come into his Commissioner planning meetings, which was the Commissioner and the assistant to the Commissioner. Every week I attended those meetings and saw everything that he was working on and became quite familiar with the issues. In addition, I had attended the board meetings and the executive committee meetings while I served as the administrator for S&I. The Commissioner actually runs the agenda in those meetings, and so I heard every issue that came before the board and the executive committee from each of the CES entities, including all of the universities, LDS Business College, and Seminaries and Institutes for six years.

Although I was familiar with the assignment, I had my own concerns about stepping into the Commissioner's role. I had a lot of background with Seminaries and Institutes but not so much with the higher-education institutions. I knew I was going to have to invest a lot of time and effort to get up to speed. I knew the issues that had come up on the board, but I did not know a lot of the people on the campuses. I had some nervousness too. I didn't know how it was going to be perceived by the people I was going to be working closely with. I knew how things would go with Garry Moore, because I had worked so closely with him for years and years. I'd been colleagues with the presidents of the higher educational institutions and sat on the board with them, but I didn't know if they were going to say, "Well, we don't want him." Who knew what would happen? I had these and other thoughts going through my mind and wondered if this was going to work. It turned out that all of the heads of the CES entities were very supportive and great to work with.

**Morgan:** *What does the Commissioner do?*

**Johnson:** I did not receive a lot of detailed instructions when I received this assignment. I never had a sit-down meeting where I was told my duties or what was expected of me. I think that's partly because they knew that I had a lot of exposure to the assignment. I had been closely tied to it previously because I had spent several years with my office next door to the Commissioner and had worked so closely with him. My assignment entails basically anything that has to do with the Church Educational System. Sometimes you hear that he's the Commissioner of Education, so occasionally people incorrectly assume that includes Sunday School and other educational arms of the Church, but technically that is not right. It is the Commissioner of the Church Educational System.

There are five entities in the Church Educational System: BYU, BYU–Idaho, BYU–Hawaii, LDS Business College, and Seminaries and Institutes, which includes the Church's elementary and secondary schools in Mexico and the Pacific. Each of those entities has a board. For Seminaries and Institutes it is the Board of Education. Each of the higher-education entities has a board of trustees. The membership of each of those boards is exactly the same. When we have a board meeting, we are actually having a combined meeting of five separate boards. So, when we have an issue for BYU–Hawaii, we are presenting that to their board of trustees. And so the board of trustees makes that decision. If the next agenda item happens to be for LDS Business College, it's their board of trustees responding to it. It's the same people and the same meeting. The members of the board currently include the First Presidency, who are the officers of the board; two members of the Twelve; a member of the Presidency of the Seventy; the Relief Society general president; and the Young Women general president. Years ago all members of the Quorum of the Twelve were on the board, but that is not true anymore. When I first started, they had four members of the Twelve on that board, two of whom were members of the executive committee. Then it went to three and now two. The officers of the board choose the makeup of the board and the executive committee.

The executive committee is a subset of the boards. Right now that committee is chaired by Elder Nelson, with Elder Oaks, Elder Hallstrom, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, and Sister Burton, the Relief Society general president, as members. They act as a clearinghouse or gatekeeper for the board and look at things in extensive detail. Upon their recommendation, items are then referred to the board for discussion or approval. Any

item that comes to the executive committee or the board comes through the Commissioner. The Commissioner's office creates the agendas for the executive committee and the board meetings and handles anything that comes down from the officers of the board or from the board to the institutions. For example, the Commissioner handles correspondence that may be sent to the First Presidency or members of the Twelve that has to do with education.

The Commissioner works very closely with the board as well as the five CES entities and particularly the heads of those entities. It seems the most important thing I do is help those institutions, and particularly the heads of those institutions, accomplish their objectives. So, when we are putting together an agenda for an executive committee or board meeting, Mark Woodruff (assistant to the Commissioner) and I actually have a meeting at BYU or a phone discussion with Idaho and Hawaii, and we speak with the president and the president's council. We talk about what issues need to come up, and there is a write-up in the book that goes to the executive committee meeting and eventually the board. These topics could include anything from the naming of a building to budget concerns and the hiring of new faculty. I go through every item with them, and sometimes tell them that we are not ready to take that item to the meeting. For example, all faculty members need clearance from the board in order to be hired. We have a write-up on each individual. Before that individual is recommended to the executive committee, I read every word, including the background of the individual, the information from the university or Seminaries and Institutes interviews, and the General Authority interview. Items from my discussions with the presidents of the institutions don't go into the book to be discussed with the executive committee unless I feel comfortable with it. There are times when I am not comfortable, so we hold the item or revise it.

In the executive committee or board meetings, they expect the commissioner to have done his homework and expect a recommendation from me. On some issues there is extended discussion, but they don't have time to go into great detail on every issue. They have to trust that we have looked into it, weighed the options, and that what is proposed is the best way to go. They are really trusting. We in turn trust the presidents of the universities that they are doing the same thing.

When an item goes to the executive committee, the item on the paper states, “Commissioner's recommendation.” That recommendation changes to “executive committee's recommendation” after they have looked at it carefully

and feel good enough about it to take it to the board. If President Monson or one of his counselors asks the executive committee how they feel about an item, they want to be able to say, “We approve of it. We think it should be done.” I have had my recommendations turned down or changed at the executive-committee level, and there have been times when it’s gone through the executive committee to the board and it has been canceled or changed. It happens. It’s not too surprising. I have a certain view and background and understanding from where I sit, and that’s the scope I can see. When the item gets to the executive committee, they have a different view and set of experiences in the Church, and they may see something that I didn’t, and the First Presidency has an even broader view than the executive committee.

I try to be helpful to the heads of the CES entities by interacting with people in the Church Office Building or General Authorities and with members of the board in order to help them accomplish what they need and want to accomplish. If there are things that need to be cleared or vetted, I may be able to help them do that. I can sometimes help the heads of the CES entities sense the vision, scope, and desires of the members of the board because I end up having more contact with them. I work closely with the executive committee, the board, and the First Presidency. The Commissioner is not a member of the board or executive committee but does attend all board and executive committee meetings and makes presentations and recommendations to those groups. The Commissioner’s assignment is a First Presidency assignment, and so he reports directly to them.

*Morgan: Since you have been the Commissioner, you have put in a leader of each of the CES entities. How do you choose the next president or administrator?*

**Johnson:** At other universities, the president is sometimes chosen because of his ability to fund-raise or his academic standing or how well he works with people, especially the stakeholders. The way we choose the president and the qualifications for the president are very different. We determine what the needs of the entity are for the near and distant future. Sure, the president can be involved in fund-raising, and his academic standing and ability to work well with people are important, but those are not our major considerations. We are looking for someone who is very talented and committed to the mission of the university and able to work under the direction of the Board of Education and the Commissioner. The Board of Trustees doesn’t want these universities drifting away from the Church as other religious universities have done from their sponsoring churches.

Due to various traditions and cultural perceptions, many are under the perception that our university presidents or heads of Seminaries and Institutes have to be men. There has clearly been a history of men in these positions, but somehow people have assumed, then, that these positions are somehow priesthood assignments. This is simply not the case. We have had women on the short list for university presidents. We want the right person to be the president or administrator, whether they are men or women.

*Morgan: You have talked a lot in the last few years in both your professional and ecclesiastical role about the importance of guiding principles. What have been some of your guiding principles in your current assignment?*

**Johnson:** One principle I have used to guide me is that this is the Lord’s work, and the more I can keep my own ego out of it, the smoother the work goes. If I can be open and listen to the board members, to the heads of the institutions, and to the Spirit, then the Lord can help guide me.

Another principle is that each of us has been called or assigned to our own position. I never wanted to be the head of or displace one of the heads of the institutions. I wanted them to do their job, and I wanted to stay in my role. I didn’t try to go to BYU and take over President Samuelson’s or President Worthen’s responsibilities. I didn’t try to take over Chad Webb’s position, even though I had been there before. Particularly at first with Chad, I tried to keep a distance so the Seminaries and Institutes people didn’t think I was coming to take back that position. I was in a different position now. I always try to remember who I face and who I report to and that has helped me.

Worrying about feelings of inadequacy is a waste of time. That is one principle I learned early on and have been facing for a lot of years. The people I’ve worked with over the last few years are incredible. They are amazing. For a number of years Jerry Lund was my boss, and then Stan Peterson. How do I work with these people who are so accomplished and so talented and gifted and not be intimidated? I could just choose to go in a corner and sulk, or I could say, “I’m going to do to the best I can, and they’ll work with me the best they can.” The more I could do that and not worry about not feeling qualified, the better job I could do. One of the most common comments people say is “Look who has been Commissioner before you,” and they start naming names, and that’s not really helpful. It’s intimidating. I had to make a decision to forget about that. I had to make a decision that, for whatever reason, this was my assignment now, and I needed to work hard and try to bless people. Let the Lord handle the rest.

The principles taught in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants are extremely applicable to any leadership assignment. Sometimes in leadership positions you can force something to happen, or you can manipulate people and events in order to get something to go the way you want it to go, but in the long run it's not right. This is a trap that you have to be careful not to fall into. It doesn't get the real result that we are after. I've tried to be open with the executive committee and the board members, as well as with the presidents of the universities or whomever I work with. I've tried my best to not shade the information I give to them or spin it in a way to get my way.

I know that it's probably not completely possible to do that objectively, but I've tried to do it right. My hope is that they can trust me. The only way they can trust me is if they know I am being open enough with them to give them all the factors that ought to be considered. Then I think I still have to be willing to step up and say, "With all of these factors, this is my recommendation." If they don't go with my recommendation, I have to decide am I going to sulk and say I'm never bringing anything in to them again, or am I going to do my best to accomplish what they ask me to do, even though it isn't the way I proposed it? I think that is one of the tough lessons to learn in the family, or in a faculty, or in a Church calling. I'm going to take my best offering and lay it on the altar and then let the Lord do what he wants with it, rather than bringing my best offering and then saying, "Let me tell you how to use it." I don't think the kingdom works in that way. I think we oversponsor our own ideas and impede the progress of the kingdom when we do that.

*Morgan: What lessons have you learned through your experience as the Commissioner?*

**Johnson:** There are probably hundreds of lessons I've learned. The biggest one is no surprise: the Lord runs this Church. His hand is in this work, and if we will just do our part the best we can and then stand still and watch, the Lord will work miracles. He does inspire his leaders. I've seen them receive inspiration.

One of the things I have learned in this and in other assignments is how important good information is to the senior Brethren and others in receiving revelation. When I first got to the Church Office Building, probably in the early 1990s, Elder Marvin J. Ashton gave a talk to the directors regarding the process of receiving revelation. I don't remember everything, but I remember him saying that inspiration and information are like the two blades of scissors.

If you just use one, it doesn't work very well, but if you pair the information with the inspiration or revelation, then those scissors work pretty well.

I think I was pretty naive when I was younger. I use to think that the President of the Church goes to the temple, the Savior tells him what to do every day, and then he goes and tells the Twelve Apostles what to do, and then we just do it, but that isn't the way revelation works. We work at it, and then we get the best solution we can and always pray for inspiration and hope the Lord will inspire us. Then he will inspire us when the timing is right and a decision needs to be made. I think we can be better at helping those who preside over us. If you go into a council, like a ward council, and if you are waiting for the bishop to tell you what you should do, I think we cripple the bishop. It is the same thing with the First Presidency. If we don't give them good information and options, it is unrealistic to have every answer ready off the top of their heads. They have the whole world and kingdom they are concerned about. These members of the Twelve have such a weight on their shoulders. We can do a lot more to help. This is in part of what a Commissioner does.

Another lesson I learned is the importance of unity in organizations. When I was first appointed as administrator of Seminaries and Institutes, President Henry B. Eyring asked me early on to set some goals and become aware of things that I would like to see happen. After pondering on that advice, I came up with a few things. One of them was to get rid of the feeling that CES was "the other church." I had General Authorities tell me that we were known as the other church. It wasn't a compliment. If there truly were those feelings, I knew it wasn't helpful. Our progress was being stopped because they saw us as separate. I knew we had to be more unified.

Related to that was an increased need for CES to work more closely at all levels with the priesthood and other organizations. This included the First Presidency, the Twelve, Area Presidencies, stake presidents, and bishops. For example, look at the youth curriculum changes. The Young Men, Young Women, and Sunday School auxiliaries had felt for a long time that major changes needed to be made in the youth curriculum, but those proposals to revise the curriculum had not yet been approved by the First Presidency. Knowing that those changes wouldn't move forward until there was unity among all the youth auxiliary leaders, including CES, Elder Robert D. Hales set up a committee that included representatives from all the youth organizations, and he assured us that if we were unified, we would get it approved. It was a challenge to get those groups together and come to a resolution where

everyone could feel good about where we were headed, but unity made possible the changes. The youth curriculum is revolutionary, and unity is a powerful principle behind it. I'm sure this is the case across all organizations. Unity is important at the First Presidency level, Quorum of the Twelve level, within CES, and in our relationships with other departments. I think we have made some progress there.

Another thing I have noticed is that sometimes we are too nervous or afraid to express ourselves. Sometimes we even get so worried or are unsure about what we are going to say, or we are so uncertain about how others are going to react, that we express our thoughts in a defensive mode. I have learned from my experience in CES that you can be honest and you can be open. It's important not only to be open in what you say but in how you react to what others say. It's important to put your thoughts and feelings on the table, and don't take it as a personal affront to you if others don't agree or accept your ideas.

I've noticed with our employees and sometimes with those in other departments that people sometimes do not feel free to speak. They somehow think that disagreeing or having an opinion different than their leader is in some way putting them in opposition to the Church. I think part of it is that we tangle up our responsibility or our job with ecclesiastical things. Some may feel that if a member of the Twelve or First Presidency or a General Authority doesn't agree with something they say, it must mean they are unrighteous and it may affect their eternal salvation, or they may be concerned about what someone else may think about their loyalty to the Brethren. I believe that unless we are off-doctrine or really off-base on something, we have a responsibility to open our mouth. In fact, I don't think I'm sustaining those leaders I'm working with—whether they be members of the Twelve on the executive committee or the board members or any other person or office above me—if I hide information because I'm worried about myself. If we go in to a meeting and then try to figure out what our leaders are thinking and then only parrot that, we aren't sustaining them. In fact, we are crippling their ability to get guidance and move the work forward. Sometimes we think that if we make a statement that may not be exactly what they are thinking, then we are saying, "I'm not sustaining my leaders" or "I'm in opposition to the prophet or a General Authority." I don't believe that.

When a decision has been made and we have direction from the board, we should get behind the decision and put our hearts into it. That is a different

situation than when we are in a counseling mode discussing an issue or are charged with gathering information to help make decisions. I have a little concern that, particularly with some employees in Seminaries and Institutes, some view the structure of the system ecclesiastically and think their leaders preside over them in an ecclesiastical sense. This just isn't accurate, and is wrong. Because of this misunderstanding, some are reticent to speak up when they could be helpful in the decision process.

I had an experience early on as the CES administrator that demonstrates this. After I had been called to be an Area Seventy, I went into my first meeting with the zone administrators. I noticed that not only did they call me "Elder Johnson" but that everything I said was right. It hit me in the middle of the meeting just what they were doing. I said, "Hold it just a minute," and we had a serious talk. I explained to them that being an Area Seventy was my Church calling, and that was what I did on the weekends and in the evenings. During the week, I'm a CES administrator, and they were zone administrators, and I needed their help. "Number one," I said, "do not call me Elder Johnson; I'm Paul when we are working. Second," I said, "you have to be willing to tell me what you are thinking. It doesn't mean I'm always going to agree with you, but you have to tell me, otherwise how can we do this?" That was a real eye-opening experience for me. I wasn't their ecclesiastical leader, and although they knew that, somehow we got things crossed.

This issue has been a little more difficult since I was called a General Authority. It was easier to draw the line as an Area Seventy. Now my calling includes my appointment as Commissioner of Education, and yet I still have the same feelings. As a Commissioner, I have tried to foster open communication. I know that the university presidents and the administrator for Seminaries and Institutes and I must be open with each other in order to be effective, and I think we have pretty open communication. It's important that those I work with know that I won't try to pull ecclesiastical rank on them. One change for me when I became a General Authority as well as an administrator was the fact that now when I come into my office on Sundays to get something done, I am magnifying my calling, whereas before I was breaking the Sabbath.

*Morgan: What have been some of the successes you have seen in CES as the Commissioner?*

**Johnson:** The real successes for the Commissioner happen in the CES entities. They are not necessarily related to what the Commissioner does; in

fact, they are much more tied to those individual places. If you look at each of the entities and see areas where progress has happened over the last few years, that's where I think the success has happened. When you see that the change has happened over the years, I wish I could take credit, but in reality it is the people on the ground doing the actual work.

Seminaries and Institutes has sharpened its focus on some very critical things. After many years and after recent encouragement, including some from the First Presidency, now there is an open door for all young single adults to take institute. For almost a century, institute was focused almost exclusively on college students. During the early nineties, the door got opened a little bit, and those young single adults who weren't in college but lived near an institute could enroll. There were pushes for change for a while, and now all young single adults are encouraged to take institute. This is really a significant turning point that has happened in the last few years, and it makes me so happy. I believe that is really going to be important for the Church over the next few years.

Another success has been the youth curriculum, as I discussed previously. I think the whole matter of the youth curriculum is one of those powerful things affecting the kingdom that CES has shaped in some way. It has been great to be in the middle of it. I think it takes into account some real principles of teaching that have been bubbling up in Seminaries and Institutes, BYU–Idaho, the Missionary Department, and across the Church. Finally we were able to unify and focus these principles for the benefit of this current generation of young people. They are looking now at implementing it among the adults, too. I think that was an important thing.

LDS Business College has had a miraculous transformation in the last few years. When Ricks College changed into BYU–Idaho, the nature of that institution changed, and they became a four-year baccalaureate program. Prior to this, Ricks had been a transfer school. Students went there for two years with the intention of transferring to BYU or some other university. After the change, that niche got lost in CES, and by natural evolution LDS Business College began to fill that niche. It got to the point where 70 percent of our students there were looking for associate degrees so they could transfer to BYU. The college was really built and has continued to be maintained in order to enable somebody to come in, spend a year or two to get a certificate and an applied degree, and get into the job market. A year ago, it was explained to the board that LDSBC was planning to refocus on their historical mission.

The board members enthusiastically approved that initiative, and in one year, they have done almost a complete 180. Now 70 percent of the students are working on applied degrees and certificates. That is a miraculous change that has happened and has been great to watch.

BYU–Hawaii has made a major transformation and expansion of the campus. They are in the process of getting up to 3,200 students on campus and making their operation much more efficient. The cost per student there is extremely expensive in Hawaii, but they are making significant progress in reducing cost while maintaining high standards.

BYU–Idaho has continued its transformation into a four-year university. Probably the most remarkable thing in the last few years has been the online program they have established. The Pathway program was started in 2009 with three sites and maybe 100 students. Now they are up to 360 sites this fall with 12,000 to 15,000 students enrolled. Their online classes for matriculated students have also increased dramatically, and that has been fascinating to watch.

There have been significant changes at BYU as well. One of the notable changes has been the explosion of BYUtv and BYU Broadcasting. They have viewership from around the world. It has been incredible to see their expansion. The upgraded programming that has happened there and the philosophy and the way they have gone forward has been really exciting to watch. In athletics, we have seen them transition into independent status in football and join the WCC in other sports. This was approved by the First Presidency.

One of the most memorable experiences for me personally as the Commissioner is my involvement in the appointment of a new university/college president or S&I administrator. I have been involved in that now for every CES entity. It started with Chad Webb just a couple of months after I came in as the Commissioner, then Larry Richards a few months later. President Cecil O. Samuelson was replaced by Kevin J. Worthen, Kim B. Clark was replaced by Clark G. Gilbert, and just recently we replaced Steven C. Wheelwright with John S. Tanner. That has been very memorable and really a touching process to go through. I've really loved every one of the heads of the institutions that I have worked with and I'm excited for all the new ones too.

Things are looking up in CES. It's an important part of the kingdom. It has made many contributions to the kingdom in the past and will make many more contributions in the future. It's a little sad to say good-bye.

**Morgan:** *What advice do you have as you are leaving your assignment as Commissioner?*

**Johnson:** I would advise teachers, administrators and all involved in CES to keep their eyes focused on the student. Not just the student that is sitting in front of them, but that student twenty years and forty years from now and on to eternity. I wish I could have done that better as a teacher. I'm trying to do better at that. I think that would be helpful. We can always improve and take steps forward in the effectiveness of our teaching. I love watching the young people of the kingdom learn and become what the Lord needs them to be. This generation that is coming up is so exciting to watch. They are powerful, and it is a privilege for us to even have the opportunity to know some of them.

I would also advise us to remember President Uchtdorf's call to "lift where you stand." If we spend energy worrying about, I wish I were doing this, or I wish I were doing that, or I wish I could have a change of a position to do that, it diverts our energies and our attention and focus away from what we can do right now in blessing peoples lives. That's true in whatever position we are in, whether you are the Commissioner or a brand-new teacher. There are things a brand-new teacher can do that I cannot do. I'm not in that classroom, and I don't know those young people.

When I was in my first assignment in Chandler, Arizona, I was really sick and ended up in the hospital for about a month and out of the classroom for at least two months or maybe a little longer. The doctors weren't able to diagnose anything for over a year. My wife, Jill, was trying to substitute for me, and we had little children. I was worried I was going to lose my job. I didn't know much about CES at the time, and I was in a one-person seminary. Our associate area director was known for being pretty gruff and straightforward, and I was just sure he was going to fire me. He came to visit me one day, and I thought he was going to tell me it was over. He wanted to find out how I was doing, and I kept telling him that my wife was taking my classes, and we had people in the ward trying to help out and babysit the kids, and that things were going to work out.

He stopped me and said, "You're not understanding. This is CES, and we take care of you. We are going to hire a substitute until you get better because we need you in CES." That was a turning point in my career. I prayed and promised the Lord I would do whatever He wanted me to do. I said, "I'll teach in junior high for the rest of my life, go wherever you want me to go and

do whatever you want me to do." That experience really helped me. I don't worry about what I'm doing or about what position I have because I know what the Lord has done for me. I love CES, and I'm glad to be a part of it. If we can just be happy where we are the Lord will put us where he needs us. The biggest challenge we have in life is to develop our ability to submit our will to the will of the Lord. That's what the Savior did perfectly. We can mistakenly get the idea that if we want to be happy, we do what we want to do. The irony is that the real joy and the fullness of joy comes when we submit our will to the will of the Lord.

The most important CES employee for me right now is the teacher who is teaching my oldest grandson this year. I don't know who it is, but that's the most important teacher in my life right now. Our daughter, this grandson's mother, just passed away a month ago. My grandson is facing life without a mom. I'm just praying for that seminary teacher and hoping that somehow he or she can help that boy as he is facing his life right now. **RE**



Aerial view of BYU-Hawaii's campus in Laie, Hawaii.

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# BYU-Hawaii: A Conversation with Steven C. Wheelwright

INTERVIEW BY FRED E. WOODS

Steven C. Wheelwright (swheelwright@hbs.edu) was president of BYU-Hawaii from 2007 to July 2015.

Fred E. Woods (fred\_woods@byu.edu) is a professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

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*This interview was held to celebrate the 60th anniversary of BYU-Hawaii and the 150th anniversary of Laie's designation as a gathering place for Latter-day Saints.*

*Steven Charles Wheelwright was born in Salt Lake City in September 1943. Raised also in this locale, he grew up loving Scouting and the outdoors. Further, Steve enjoyed swimming on both the East High School and the University of Utah swim teams. Following missionary service in the North Scottish Mission (1963-65), Steve returned to the University of Utah, where he met and later married Margaret Steele. They are now the parents of five children and have twenty grandchildren.*

*After completing an MBA and PhD degrees at Stanford, Steven spent one year in France at INSEAD and then joined the Harvard Business School faculty in 1971. Eight years later the Wheelwrights received a tenured offer to return to the Stanford Business School. In 1988 they moved back to Boston because of an offer extended by Harvard University and because they felt inspired that this was the best place for their family.*