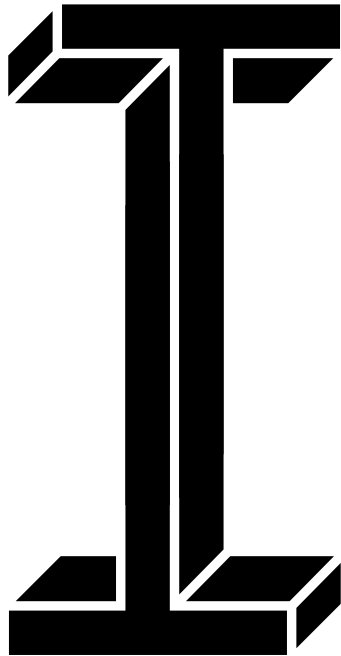


IN
AND
OUT
OF
AFRICA

*The following article
was the keynote
address delivered
at the J. Reuben
Clark Law Society
annual conference on
October 1, 2015.*

STEVEN J. LUND





am thrilled to be here with so many lawyers once again; it has been probably all the way back to law school since I was in the same room with so many lawyers. I was afraid then too. I thought I might talk today about my career in “lotion law,” but that’s a pretty arcane field.

A few years ago, in my role as an Area Seventy, Elder Russell M. Nelson and I were assigned to reorganize a BYU young single adult stake. Elder Nelson told me he had had an impression about someone he had met, and he asked me to go over and meet Jim Rasband at the Law School and, if I liked him and felt so impressed, call him to be the stake president. What was there not to like? So Dean Rasband and I have been able to work closely together for several years in a young single adult coordinating council. His contributions to this community extend first to the law school but far beyond as well.

I am excited to be here with some of my law school compatriots. Although I don’t know very many of the rest of you personally, I think I do know all of you. I know that you have worked harder than most people to try to put yourself in a position to add value to society by going to law school in order to tool yourself up to making unique contribu-

tions to the world. I don’t know if I have met any law graduates who didn’t have a feeling in the back of their minds that some of their legal education was going to have something to do with making the world a better place. So thank you for what you have done, for what you are doing, and for what you will yet do.

Our profession is much maligned. In the 30 years of my business life, I have had plenty of reasons to malign lawyers myself. But it’s worth recalling that Rex E. Lee, our first Law School dean, used to say, with his profound sense of gravitas, that it was patently unfair to throw out the whole barrel because of six or seven hundred thousand bad apples.

So, maligned or not, I am a lawyer—even though I have spent most of my career outside the active practice of law. When I look at the mission statement of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society, it causes me to wonder if those sentiments still pertain to me, a recovering lawyer. The mission statement seems to be asking you and me to believe that Heavenly Father actually cares about what we do for a living—that He actually engages Himself in our everyday lives, including in our professions. Well, I believe that He does.

CALLING UPON THE LORD

I grew up in California, came to BYU as a freshman, went on a mission to Holland, and then had a very direct impression that rather than returning immediately here to school, I should join the army—an idea that was brand new and quite bewildering to me. But I had been a missionary, and I knew where those feelings came from. So, with a lot of fear and trepidation, and maybe a little resentment, I followed that prompting, joined the army, and found myself at basic training with the wildest, most reprobate group of people I had ever met—and those



were the drill sergeants. Many of my platoon members were there because judges had told them, “Go to the army or go to jail.”

I had had an impression to enlist, but there wasn’t any other light that came with that impression as to why I should spend these three years heading down that path. We would train in the sand dunes of Fort Ord, California, until 10 at night, go to bed, and then, sometime in the middle of the night, be required to get up one at a time for two-hour fireguard shifts to make sure that the building we were in hadn’t burned down.

In the middle of one of those night shifts, while standing under a fire-watch light by myself, I was feeling pretty exhausted and pitiful, trying to figure out how I was going to get through this. I poured out my sad soul to the Lord. And I heard myself utter the sentence “Father, come soldier with me.”

My testimony to you is that He did. I was strengthened. Running through the sand dunes in combat boots carrying weapons and steel helmets became easier. For the next three years things happened to me that have mattered. They matter still. In fact, from the vantage of hindsight, I can see that every valuable thing—every single thing that matters in my life today—flowed out of the decision to be faithful to that impression.

Three years later, after a six-year summer vacation, I came back to BYU as a 24-year-old sophomore to get an undergraduate degree. I thought I might like to be a philosophy professor, and I minored in philosophy, taking classes from Truman G. Madsen. I determined that I was not Truman G. Madsen, and so, of course, I ended up in law school.

During the first year I learned that it would be valuable for me to seek out a clerkship. This was during the Carter years. Not many firms were hiring, but I beat the bushes and got a clerkship in Farmington, New Mexico. I

took my eight-months-pregnant wife, and we loaded our stuff into a U-Haul trailer and moved down there. I had never been in an actual law office before. I didn’t really know what lawyers did, and my year of law school didn’t help that much. It had been intellectually stimulating, but how to make a living at it was a mystery. I thought that I would show up at this law firm and that there would be an orientation or a tutorial—that they would explain to me how this works, what you do.

Instead I walked in and this lawyer handed me a file and said, “I’m glad you’re here. I’m the contract city attorney for a little community here, and we have a defect in our municipal code. We’ve got a criminal case going on, and opposing counsel is using that defect as a defense. If we lose this, we are going to lose a hundred more cases on appeal. The law library is down in the middle of town. Here’s the combination for the cypher lock on the door.”

I headed out with my heart pounding. I found the law library, where I was all by myself, and I looked around at the stacks. It didn’t look anything like the law library at J. Reuben Clark Law School. I sat down and read the file with a growing sense of doom. I had no idea where to start. I had no ideas at all except that I had a pregnant wife, and I wondered how I would explain to her why we would have to go back home on my first day of work. I found myself again kneeling under that barrack’s fire-watch light, pleading for a miracle. And I heard myself say the words “Heavenly Father, today come clerk with me.” I was immediately filled with a warm, affirming Spirit.

I read the file again while walking through the stacks and finally ended up writing a brief. A couple of weeks later, my wife and I were in the downtown area and we ran into the judge of the case. It’s a small town, and as we introduced ourselves, he said, “I know who you are. You are the clerk who wrote that brief.”

I replied, “Yes, I did.”

He turned to my wife and said, “You should be very proud of your husband. We were in a really tight spot. We say that ‘hard cases make bad law’—and this was one of those cases. But he found a way that allowed us to do the right thing.”

This was an obscure little legal case in a most obscure place, but it taught me that Heavenly Father will go to obscure places with us.

A few years later I graduated from law school, and I was working for a little firm in Provo. I had passed the Arizona and Utah bar exams, and I was trying to figure out what to do with my career when one of my clients with a little start-up company approached me. We had become friends counting tithing on Sunday afternoons while serving in a singles ward



bishopric together on campus. He offered me some worthless stock in his little company in exchange for some of my proportionately valued legal advice—I was a pretty new lawyer. Well, I knew a good deal when I saw one, and I incorporated the company and did some regulatory research for them. Soon he offered me a full-time job—not because he needed a full-time lawyer but because he needed help managing the endless issues of the day. I was feeling that my law firm was not going to be a long-term opportunity for me, so I made a leap and became executive vice president and general counsel of a company with six other employees.

As it turned out, a few years later it became something of a rocket ship. We experienced dramatic growth attributable largely to a product we had licensed from an Italian pharmaceutical company—an innovative, cool product that animated our sales force. Our sales went so well that the Italian company started being approached by large, international companies wanting to license its product. We were a little company; they were big companies. The Italian company had promised us exclusivity and was now having second thoughts. A meeting was scheduled in New York City.

I flew back by myself. It was the first time I had ever been outside the airport in New York City. I walked into a large and formidable antique mahogany conference room in the New York Athletic Club, the home of the Heisman Trophy. There was a band of lawyers there: half a dozen from Rome and some more from New York. There, too, was the venerable old chairman and owner of the Italian pharmaceutical company, whom I was meeting for the first time. Everyone was there to make the case that we were in breach of our agreement. They had developed a half-dozen theories and had prepared a document for me to sign, acknowledging that we were in breach and unwinding our deal.

That morning, before leaving my hotel, I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders because by then we had hundreds of employees and tens of thousands of people whose livelihoods depended on the outcome of this ensuing conversation. If we were declared to be in breach, we were going to be sued by all of them, and we would lose the product that was the locomotive of our company. This was for us an existential event.

So, kneeling in my hotel room that morning, after a sleepless night, I made this now familiar plea: “Heavenly Father, today come lawyer with me.”

I went into the meeting room, and for an hour they regaled me with all of the reasons they were going to pull that license. But truth was on our side. When they finished and looked to me for a response, I turned to the wizened Italian chairman. He was ancient—he was like my age today. I told him our story and walked him through the issues. I became something of the advocate I had been trained here to be.

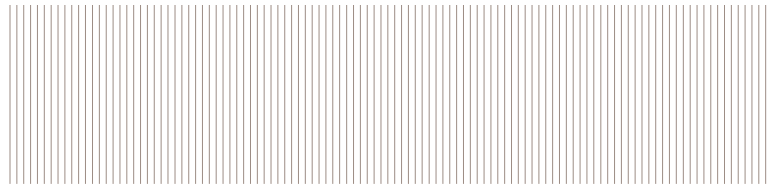
When I was finished, his face had softened, and that good man looked around at his colleagues and said, with his Italian accent, “The facts are not with us.” And so it came to pass that now, decades later, we are still selling that product.

I don’t tell you that story to tell you that I was a great lawyer but to say that on that day I was a much better lawyer than I knew how to be. The Lord does engage Himself in our professional lives.

B E C O M I N G A F O R C E F O R G O O D I N T H E W O R L D

The Law Society’s mission statement encourages us to “strive through public service and professional excellence to promote fairness and virtue.” It turns out that I unwittingly went to law school to become a lotion salesman. My career has largely been in a sales and marketing company. Sales may be the hardest way to make a living, next to being a trial lawyer. A salesman has

M O R T A L L I F E I S F I L L E D W I T H M I R A C L E S .





to start over every morning with the question “Where can I find someone to sell something to today?” In the long run, sales can be very lucrative, but it is usually a challenge to persevere and not quit along the way. One of the secrets of our business has been our commitment to our corporate responsibility initiatives. Our motto asks that we try—together—to be a “force for good in the world through great products, a great business opportunity, and a great culture” that helps those in need. Those good deeds make the sales endeavor more rewarding and more “sticky.” We have found that people will do more for a good cause than they will for a check. Sales people come and go, but they tend to stay loyal to a cause. If we can engage them in something bigger than themselves, if they come to see their professional lives actually working to be a force for good in the world, then they—and we—are more likely to get through the hard days.

We do charitable work in Africa, where there are many, many problems. Discussing our work there, I hear this sentiment all the time: “You know, my wife and I have a lifelong dream to go to Africa. When we can afford to, we are going to go there and try to do something meaningful.” It seems that almost all of us who belong to the family of man have an inward desire to serve, to add value, and to do something outside of our own selfish needs. And so, by making it one of our company’s core missions to be a “force for good in the world,” we have become an aggregator of the goodwill of more than a million salespeople throughout the world. Our people are not waiting for retirement to make a difference; they take pride in the fact that a portion of their professional lives and efforts is making a difference in the here and now. We have been able to do some remarkable things together.

In Malawi we built an agricultural school to help farmers in central Africa feed their families. Their family farms have been broken up so many times among family members through the generations that they are now too small to support families. The children often end up having to leave their farms and go to the city to try to make a living. These broken families are part of the African plight.

We employ teachings from the BYU Ezra Taft Benson Agricultural and Food Institute to teach 21st-century agricultural principles to farmers still living in the Iron Age. We leverage our campus by training government agricultural extension agents, who then take those principles back out into the countryside.

A few weeks ago in Malawi I visited a little tribal village. The headman of the village had become aware of a principle our school teaches that fields should not be burned after harvest, which is their centuries-old practice. By not burning the fields but instead digging the biomass from the last year’s crop back into the ground, the nitrogen load in that organic mass becomes available to the next year’s crop. This improves the soil and reduces the need for prohibitively expensive fertilizer. The headman had learned of this novel practice from us, and while his village was burning its stubble, he distributed his biomass into his fields. That year, at the end of the growth cycle, he harvested 25 bags of grain from a field that the year before had yielded only five bags. The village looked at his example and, without further discussion, did the same thing the next year. So did the neighboring villages. The whole area now follows that example, changing the practices of the whole region and dramatically improving grain yields. This is a tremendous instance of leadership by example. And every railcar of grain produced in those fields is a carload not needing to be donated by charities.

Malawi is a country of 14 million people, and two million of them are AIDS orphans. Every village has dozens or many dozens of children with no mother or father. Villagers get together and find places for the children to sleep, but they struggle to feed their own children, let alone these orphans.

To help, about 10 years ago we built a factory in Malawi in which we manufacture a vitamin-enriched porridge product formulated for malnourished children. We started a program inviting our distributors and employees to buy packets of this

product. We use local produce and local farmers, employ local people, avoid shipping costs by processing and packaging it all locally, and then distribute it through our charitable partners, who hand it out to those in need. When added to boiling water, it becomes food nutritious enough to spare malnourished children the wasting health problems that occur with starvation. There are now more than 100,000 children who are eating this every day; 450 million meals have already been provided to these children and others in developing-world trouble spots. When we think about making a difference in the world by applying our professional competencies in directed ways, we can make the world a better place while we make a living.

Three weeks ago I was in Malawi. Every year I go with a group of our people—salespeople and employees—to make sure that we are keeping our promises. I also serve on the Young Men general board of the Church, and when I travel like this, I meet with local Church leaders to learn how the Young Men program is working. So I met with the mission president there, President Leif J. Erickson. He and his wife are doing some marvelous things. They invited me to go with them to a United Nations refugee camp several hours away, established to help with the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by providing a place for Congolese refugees to go.

In the camp they had discovered a Church member family. In the Congo this family had become aware of the Church, read the Book of Mormon, gained testimonies, and applied for baptism, but they were told that the organized Church wasn't in their region and that they would need to wait. So they held Church meetings in their little house and taught their children the gospel for 11 years until the Church did arrive and they were able to be baptized. At about this time, the parents concluded that where they lived was too dangerous for their children. So they sent their children out of the country to this refugee camp we went to visit.

In the camp we found two sons, a daughter with two young children, and an adult cousin who had fled in fear that they would be conscripted into one of the rogue gangs roaming the countryside.

There was also an older son, whom we did not meet. This 26-year-old had always wanted to serve a mission, but because of the delays, flight, escape, and uncertainty, serving had never been a possibility. When the mission president discovered this family and met with them, this son expressed his hope that he would be able to be a missionary. So President Erickson put together a mission application for him and sent it off.

It came back from Church headquarters saying, essentially, "Unfortunately, probably not." The reasons were that he was 26 years old, which is the upper age limit for missionaries, and, more ominously, that he did not have a passport. The only way to get a passport would be to go back to the Congo, a journey everyone judged to be too far and too dangerous—everyone but him.

He immediately left the camp and somehow made his way across borders and countries, making his way back into the Congo. When we sat with this refugee family in their little red-brick shelter in Malawi, they showed us a letter they had received a few days earlier from their prospective-missionary older brother. He had arrived

home safely and was in the process of applying for his passport while he lay low at his parents' home. He wrote, "Tell the mission president that as soon as I get my passport, I'll be back and be ready to go."

The commitment of this young man is somewhat different than mine. At age 19 I thought that submitting to a blood test was a lot to be asked.

Later that day I met a 30-year-old man in a remote town who had been studying for a master's degree at a divinity school in Malawi. After a comparative religion class one day, he had commented to his professor that he was surprised at how many churches there were. He said something to him like, "Who of all these parties are right? Which church most closely follows the doctrines of the ancient church, the church of the Bible?" (*quoting* Joseph Smith—History 1:10). The professor matter-of-factly answered, "Well, there is such a church, but we don't cover it in this class because it is not yet here in Africa. It's in America. It's called the Mormon church."

Out of curiosity this young man found a library and a computer and started looking up Mormonism. You might think the Internet would have been the end of this story, but instead he ended up Skyping with sister missionaries on Temple Square. They sent him a Book of Mormon, he gained a testimony, and the sisters called the mission president to see if he could be baptized. But again, since he lived 150 kilometers away from the organized Church, he was going to have to wait. The mission president arranged to visit with the young man. He responded that he would do whatever he was asked but sought permission to teach his family and friends and to bring them together to study the gospel.

Some months later I went along with President and Sister Erickson to visit them. The Monday afternoon we arrived there were 60 people at the man's home. They conducted a meeting in which they sang hymns of the Restoration, listened to four speakers, and said opening and closing prayers—all in their local Chewa language. And there was not a member of the Church in the room outside of the missionaries and me. I didn't understand the Chewa talks, except for the occasional words *Thomas S. Monson* and *Joseph Smith*. On the Sunday





before, they had split their informal group into two informal branches, 15 kilometers apart, with more than 100 people showing up for church on Sundays.

The mission president saw what was going on and said, “I’m probably not supposed to have done this, but I let them see book 2 of the Church’s handbook of instructions. Since they are meeting anyway, I thought they should have an idea of what to do. In the handbook they learned about having Young Men and Young Women meetings during the week, so now they meet on Sundays and on Wednesday evenings.”

One Sunday a few months ago, in the middle of the growing season, one of these Church investigators came home to his family and said, “Today at church I learned that God is not pleased with tobacco.” They talked about it and made a decision. The next morning they got up and walked into their half-grown field of tobacco, which is the principle cash crop in Malawi, and hoed it back into the earth. Then they replanted corn. I talked to him after the meeting, a little worried for them in this country, where a failed crop is often fatal.

I asked, “How’s it going?”

He said, “We got a little corn. And, to make up the difference, I started raising bees. I found some beehives.”

I asked, “How’s that going?”

“It’s going really well—but it will be going so much better once I can afford a bee suit.”

Mortal life is filled with miracles. I tell you these stories to illustrate that my life in the law has been an exciting one. It has been a different course than the one I set out on in the formal practice of law, but the principles that I learned in law school have guided much of what I have done and have enhanced and given me standing and understanding in those places I have found myself. It was my legal education—my law degree—that provided me access to where I have gone in my professional life. It has been God’s willingness to come with me that has enabled miracles, to which I have been little more than an innocent bystander.

Thank you for all that you are. God bless you in all that you do. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. [cm](#)

Steven J. Lund, ’83, serves as executive chair of the board of Nu Skin Enterprises. He is a member of the Utah and Arizona Bar Associations and has served on the board of directors of U.S. Direct Selling Association, as chair of the board of Utah Valley University, and currently as a member of the State Board of Regents. He is a former president of the Georgia Atlanta Mission and an Area Seventy, and he serves on the Young Men general board and is coordinator of the Provo City Center Temple Dedication Committee. He and his wife, Kalleen Kirk, married a week before he started law school at BYU and have four children and seven grandchildren.