

# *Four Keys to Success*

JOSEPH B. WIRTHLIN

All of us over a lifetime will collect among the pebbles of the day a lot of gems that stand out as special and unique. These are the moments that fill our hearts with joy and gratitude. These are the days we look back on with fondness and reflect upon from time to time. These are the days that bring a warm smile to our lips and tenderness to our hearts. I hope this will be such a day for you.

It certainly is for me. I am grateful for this honor and for the generous introduction. Thank you for the gracious words that have been given today.

I am also grateful that I wasn't required to pass a test to qualify for this honor. I congratulate you, however, on the fact that you have passed all the tests required of you in order to be here today. I congratulate you on obtaining a degree from this outstanding university named after one of our great prophets, President Brigham Young. The inspired principles he taught are being carried out

by another great leader and General Authority of the Church, President Merrill J. Bateman.

I congratulate the parents, spouses, family members, and friends who have given their great support to their graduate and who have helped them to this day of celebration.

I have always loved animals. When I was a boy, my favorite pet was a dog I called Ruff. Today I would like to tell you about a test that Ruff flunked.

I suppose I named my dog Ruff because he looked and acted that way. He was a homely dog, an unlikely and unsuccessful cross between a bloodhound and an Airedale, and he was always getting into fights—and he loved to chase motorcycles. Unfortunately for Ruff, the motorcycle he loved to chase more than any other belonged to a policeman.

He never learned—that is, until one fateful day when he chased after the policeman one too many times and the officer shot Ruff in the foot. It scared

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my poor dog half to death, and he limped home whimpering and whining. I dressed his wound as best I could, and Ruff eventually recovered. But he never chased motorcycles after that.

Instead he followed me to work at my father's business during the summer. Ruff wasn't very welcome at work; he always seemed to be in the way. I tried to get him to go home, but he would not leave my side.

One day a young boy popped a balloon, and Ruff flew out the door at work and ran at full speed for the safety of our home. I guess he thought the policeman had come looking for him. From that day on, if I wanted Ruff to get out of our way, I would just pop a sack, and off he would flee in a beeline for home.

I am sure that before he got shot, chasing motorcycles seemed like a good idea to Ruff. Perhaps he was thinking, "This is exciting, and I am willing to risk the consequences in order to have a good time."

But then he learned for himself through that terrifying experience that his thinking was shortsighted. There is a moral to this story, although I would rather think of it as advice from me to you, graduate to graduate.

It is hard to believe that I am more than eighty years of age. In dog years that is antediluvian. Anyone who lives as long as I have has usually learned a few things about life and is also willing and eager to impart his wisdom to anyone who is patient enough to listen. Just between me and you, there are hundreds of things I would like to share with you.

But in the interest of time, I will mention only four that I consider absolutely golden. These principles have been on my mind of late. They will enrich your life immeasurably and might even save you from unnecessary pain, sorrow, or grief, such as that of my dog Ruff because he was not very obedient and not always as farsighted as he should have been.

Here are the four principles that I would like to discuss today:

1. Study the life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and emulate His example.
2. Love your neighbor as yourself.

3. Learn to work.

4. Be of good cheer and have faith that your Heavenly Father will be with you if you are obedient to the commandments of the gospel.

**First, study the life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and emulate His example.** He is our great role model. Search the scriptures and learn of Him. Work to develop the qualities that He possessed. He was the perfect leader, teacher, and friend. He is the Savior of the world. He atoned for the sins of all mankind.

When someone asked Him what the greatest commandment was, without hesitation He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). Jesus showed us how we should love our Father in Heaven.

The Savior fasted and prayed continually, seeking direction and strength. He had compassion for children, for the sick, and for those who suffer. He knew the scriptures and used them to teach and inspire those who heard Him. He was a model of obedience, worthiness, and personal righteousness. Although He was courageous, noble, and faithful, He was at the same time meek and humble. He was selfless. In the Book of Mormon we read that the Savior asked the Nephites, "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be?" His response was simple and profound: "Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

Of all of the graduates across the world this year, graduates of BYU ought to be the best examples of Christlike living.

**Second, love your neighbor as yourself.** This second great commandment (see Matthew 22:39) goes beyond smiling and waving at the person across the fence. When we truly love our fellow men and women, we "are willing to mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9). We become like the Nephites of old who "in their prosperous circumstances . . . did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished" (Alma 1:30).

The BYU motto Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve represents the call of the Master to spend your life in service to others.

In the end, we need the poor as much or even more than they need us. It is through compassion and charity for others that our souls are enlarged and our hearts are filled with joy.

**Third, learn to work.** While serving as area president in Europe for the Church, I happened to read a plaque that made an impression upon me. That plaque hangs in my office today. Beneath the image of a man plowing a field with a team of horses are the words of the great German philosopher Goethe: *“Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast, / Erwirb es um es zu besitzen,”* which, translated, means, “That which you have been bequeathed by your fathers, / Earn it in order to possess it” (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Night,” *Faust*, part 1 [1808], lines 682–83).

There are some who believe that good things will happen to them if they merely sit back and wait. Not so. As Captain Moroni, the consummate man of action, stated:

*Behold, could ye suppose that ye could sit . . . and because of the exceeding goodness of God ye could do nothing and he would deliver you? Behold, if ye have supposed this ye have supposed in vain.* [Alma 60:11]

God will guide our footsteps, but first He waits for us to move our feet.

Whatever your honorable work may be, give it the best that is in you. Let your name always be associated with diligent effort and uncompromising quality—even when there appears to be no reward and even when it appears no one is watching. If you give the best of yourself to your labors, you will be rewarded tenfold.

At the Final Judgment there won’t be much interest in the titles we have accumulated during this life, but there will be great interest in the work that we did within the walls of our own homes. The work of parenting and mentoring cannot be delegated nor neglected. Do that work with all the energy and creativity you can muster and you will be blessed during this life as well as throughout eternity.

Recently the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (23 September 1995). I exhort you to study the words of this proclamation regarding marriage and the family. Incorporate these words of wisdom as you work diligently at home and in the world.

**Fourth, be of good cheer and have faith that your Heavenly Father will be with you.** Do the best you can and the Lord will strengthen and prosper you. “Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly” (Doctrine and Covenants 90:24).

Decide to be happy and then make good on your resolution. Everyone passes through times of sorrow and suffering. In a letter to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Helen Keller wrote, “We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world” (1 March 1890; first published in Holmes, “Over the Teacups,” *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1890, 702; also in Keller, *The Story of My Life* [1903], 182). Moments of sadness can refine us and make us stronger.

Hard times don’t have to make you bitter—they can make you better. Regardless of how rocky the path, move forward continually with faith, believing you will succeed. Don’t let the fear of failure stop you from greatness or goodness. Have courage to surmount all challenges.

*Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.* [2 Nephi 31:20]

Now my beloved brothers and sisters, I want you to take a moment to celebrate the accomplishment of this day. But don’t celebrate too long, for this is not a time of rest and comfort. It is a time for great and mighty deeds. It is a time for noble and visionary thoughts in building the kingdom of God.

Today you launch your ship into an ocean of life and set sail for new horizons. Like other great explorers, you travel into unknown waters.

Each of you is a pioneer on the grand path of our mortal existence.

I extend to you my love and my congratulations. I fervently pray that all of your righteous desires may be realized. As you emulate your Savior, love your fellow men and women, work with all your might, and have joyful faith in the Lord, you will avoid many of the pitfalls and sorrows of life. Although your life's journey may not always be smooth, I promise you a full measure of joy, happiness, and the rich blessings of our Heavenly Father.

I bear my testimony and witness of the divinity of the Savior and the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Gordon B. Hinckley stands today as the prophet, seer, and revelator and holds all the keys to the kingdom of God on this earth. I invoke my blessing on each of you who has achieved recognition from this outstanding institution of learning. I bear witness to the relevancy of the gospel in these latter days and do so in the holy name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.