

Stand with the Grateful “One”

CECIL O. SAMUELSON

Graduates and families, honored guests, brothers, sisters, and friends, it is my happy responsibility and privilege to express again our warm welcome to you on this very significant day in your lives and in the history of Brigham Young University. We appreciate your patience and persistence. Your devotion to the cause and the occasion that brings us together is commendable. For all of these things, and especially for the accomplishments of those of you being recognized, I offer our profound congratulations and hearty appreciation.

It is often observed with a touch of both irony and humor that we describe the formal ending of your university experience as a commencement. I'm personally grateful that we don't describe these as "end-of-the-road exercises." You have so much excitement to experience, contributions to make, and growth yet ahead of you.

The designation of commencement is entirely proper here—as it is at other universities—because today we acknowledge your qualifications and great potential for success in the future that you are now formally entering. Many of you will continue with further education—some here at BYU and most at distinguished graduate institutions throughout

the world. A large number will enter the world of work or one of the honored professions, and yet others will anxiously fulfill the dream of turning full-time attention to the exalted role of mother. Whatever your plans and whatever your next steps, please know that you go with our confidence in your prospects and our gratitude for our association together these past few years.

Today and in the convocations tomorrow we will award 6,285 degrees, which include those completed last December. While most are bachelor's degrees, 717 are master's degrees and 190 are doctorates. As always, there is a tremendous age span in those receiving baccalaureate degrees, with the youngest graduate being 19 and the oldest 61. Fifty-four percent of the graduating class is already married, and I have it on good authority that those numbers are likely to increase significantly in the days and months ahead. Interestingly, 30 percent of the undergraduates honored today have attended other institutions of higher learning prior to enrolling at Brigham Young University.

Cecil O. Samuelson was president of Brigham Young University when this commencement address was given on 26 April 2007.

I have been impressed that in comparison to almost all student bodies across this great land, you stand out in a number of ways. One way is the amount of debt that you have accumulated tends to be smaller and the default rate on various student loans is far, far below the national average. For all of these things we commend and thank you. Please continue to be careful. Do not mortgage your future by unwise economic choices in the immediate years ahead.

In this context let me remind you yet again of a different kind of debt you have all incurred—different in that it cannot be tallied in a checkbook or bank balance, but it is real just the same. I speak of the tremendous debt owed by each of you to your spouses, parents, families, and other direct financial benefactors. I speak also of the faithful members of the Church worldwide, many living in relative poverty and without realistic hope of ever enjoying a BYU education either themselves or through their families. They pay their tithes and offerings with complete confidence in the leaders of the Church who so carefully and generously make the incomparable BYU experience possible for us. I hope you will always remember their sacrifice and generosity in your prayers.

In a similar vein, I wish to express our gratitude as a university community for the so very many who have generously contributed to the beautiful new Gordon B. Hinckley Alumni and Visitors Center. This remarkable building, which will be referred to as the Hinckley Center, is rapidly nearing completion just to the south and west of the Marriott Center. Some 70,000 people—including thousands of students and thousands of alumni from around the world—have had a part in this project that will be, we hope, a fitting memorial to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B.

Hinckley, and a much-needed enhancement to our already beautiful and functional campus.

In addition, I hope we will commit ourselves today—and continue in this commitment throughout our lives—to contribute in every way we can to build our nation, our families, our church, and our alma mater. Gratitude is easily verbalized but often difficult to actualize.

You remember the account of Jesus meeting the 10 men with leprosy. All of them called to the Lord and pled for mercy or to be cured. The Savior told them what to do and they did it, resulting in the cleansing of their leprosy. Sadly, there was only one of the 10 who thought to return and thank the Lord. Think of Jesus' question to the one thoughtful and grateful man: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17; see Luke 17:11–19).

BYU and its graduates—you—excel in almost every category and consideration. I am convinced that we will never forget our significant debt and will ever recognize the privilege it is to be part of this grand and heaven-blessed institution. I am sure you will always wish to stand with the grateful "one" and not the neglectful nine. We promise you that we will not forget you and will do all we can to remind you of your special blessings and privileges as graduates of Brigham Young University. We ask that you also keep us in your prayers and thoughts as we keep you in ours. We need your ongoing help to have BYU become even better in the years ahead. Your continued participation and splendid examples as you go throughout the world will mean a great deal to those who follow you here in the days ahead.

Again, I congratulate and thank you and those supporting and sustaining you. As you commence your brilliant futures, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you and yours in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.