

Lessons Learned

CECIL O. SAMUELSON

Graduates, families, brothers, sisters, and friends, it is a signal privilege accorded to me to greet you on this wonderful and special occasion. It is a day of celebration. For some, the major emotion is relief. For others, it is anticipation. For all, we hope this is a day of gratitude.

All who are here today have had some role in the achievements we praise and extol. Of course the graduates whose names are found in the program are central to our recognition. Yet none of them, as impressive as they are, could have accomplished the achievements we celebrate without the contributions of so many that we will identify specifically later in the program.

Each graduating class is unique and remarkable. By my calculation, the age span between our youngest graduate and the eldest is 58 years—spanning the late teens to the middle of the eighth decade of life. Over half of our 6,100-plus graduates are married, and many of you have children. And we expect the numbers to increase rather quickly in the immediate years ahead. Whatever your personal circumstance, know that we are proud of you and have great confidence in you and in your futures.

We live in somewhat unsettled times, so it is quite natural for you to have concerns about

the specifics of where you might end up living, studying, or working. Some of you will go on for more education, some will enter the world of work, and some of you will really be working as you stay at home with children with rarely a recess or a day off. Be concerned, of course, but don't be distressed. Things will work out if you do your best, live wisely, and keep your covenants.

It has been said that one of the purposes of education is to learn to avoid mistakes. While this is true, it is also important to understand that we can learn very significant lessons from mistakes. In my judgment, a truly educated person is one who never personally repeats the same mistake and who also avoids well-known and foolish mistakes without ever personally experiencing them.

We do not need to make most mistakes ourselves to learn critical lessons of life. If we, like Mormon, are "quick to observe" (Mormon 1:2), we will be able to steer our way clear of major errors and poor judgments. You have been well taught in your studies and classes by excellent faculty, by classmates, and by yourselves as

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well. Your academic records give us confidence that you not only have mastered the required curriculum in each of your disciplines but have also learned better how to learn.

Skill, discipline, and the gift of lifelong learning should give you the confidence to deal with life enthusiastically and with strength. Because of your BYU experience, you understand that real, consequential learning always comes “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). Almost all of you have had the gift of the Holy Ghost conferred upon you, and all are entitled to the Spirit of Christ to help you make proper decisions and avoid sin and error.

While you will certainly encounter issues, challenges, and difficulties, you will also have

wonderful opportunities and privileges never before considered in any way. You are well equipped to deal with all of them because of the natural skills you have honed here at BYU and the promised blessings you will have because of your faithfulness in honoring your covenants and keeping God’s commandments.

Thank you for what you have contributed to BYU and what you will yet do for your families, communities, church, and the world. The gospel is true, and we are led today by living prophets, including those from whom we will hear in this commencement. We will pray for you always as we honor you today, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.