

To Live Well

RICHARD G. SCOTT

Before I share a message with you, I'd like to share the strongest impression I've had just sitting here. It is a realization of how pleased our Father in Heaven and the Savior are for the lives of each of you who are present—for the students who graduate, the staff, and the professors who teach. This miracle of a university is well-led and producing strong leadership in a world that needs it urgently and desperately.

No one with any degree of spiritual sensitivity can stand at this place in the presence of such a concentration of devoted and righteous graduates, parents, loved ones, faculty, and staff and not feel overwhelmed with gratitude and appreciation. I am deeply moved in contemplation of what can occur in the ensuing years from what you graduates have learned at this unique university. You have the potential for making deep and abiding contributions throughout the world. You have the will to form eternal families, to orient and raise righteous children, to strengthen a host of professions, to give caring service, and to be a force for good in a world that desperately needs it.

With profound feelings of thankfulness I warmly greet each one of you whom we honor at this commencement service. Each has met the lofty standards of personal worthiness and

academic achievement to qualify to be at this singular university. You have kept those standards of righteousness. Through many long, arduous days and nights of devoted study, exacting testing, and other rigorous qualifying effort, you have well earned the degree that will be conferred upon you today. You not only have attained an outstanding secular education, but you have done it while meeting the highest standards of integrity and spirituality. That's not true of what will happen on many other campuses throughout the world. You will celebrate in honorable and honest ways. There will be some celebrations in other places where vitally important commandments of God are violated, but not here, because you are worthy and righteous. I am truly humbled to be in your presence.

I do not know if I will ever have another opportunity to speak to you again in a like setting. My intent is to share some lessons learned in the crucible of my own life's experience to help you build securely on the foundation you

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have laid here at Brigham Young University. That will require mentioning some of the innermost feelings of my heart. I know that the largest portion of the gathering today consists of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I ask those of you with different religious backgrounds to translate these comments into concepts comfortable to you.

Would you consider that I am in a private setting with you as an individual or married couple? Forgive me if I speak quite plainly from my heart.

This world is in serious trouble. The fundamental values of this nation are being undermined. There is a continual crumbling of principle, virtue, integrity, and religious values—the foundation stones of civilization and definitive ingredients of peace and happiness. I will share with you as simply and as clearly as I am able a pattern for success and happiness in life despite these conditions.

God has given you the capacity to exercise faith so that you may find peace, joy, and purpose in life. However, to employ its power, that faith must be rooted in something secure. There is no more solid foundation than faith in the love Heavenly Father has for you, faith in His plan of happiness, and faith in the willingness and power of Jesus Christ to fulfill all of His promises.

Some of the principles upon which faith is based include:

- Trust in God and in His desire to provide help when needed, no matter how challenging the circumstance
- Obedience to His commandments and a life that demonstrates that He can trust you
- Sensitivity to the quiet promptings of the Spirit and courageous implementation of the resulting impressions
- Patience and understanding when God lets you struggle to grow and answers

come a piece at a time over an extended period

It will be helpful to you to understand and use the power of the interaction of faith and character. God uses your faith to mold your character. Character is woven patiently from threads of doctrine, principle, and obedience. Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming. Your character will be the yardstick that God will use to determine how well you have used your mortal life. Strong moral character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Such choices are made with trust in things that are believed and, when acted upon, will be confirmed as true.

As you walk to the boundary of your understanding into the twilight of uncertainty, exercising faith, you will be led to find solutions to the challenges of life you would not obtain otherwise. With even the strongest faith, God will not always reward you immediately according to your desires. Rather, He will respond with what in His eternal plan is best for you a piece at a time. Your continuing exercise of faith will forge strength of character available to you in times of critical need. Such character is not developed in moments of great challenge or temptation. That is when it is used.

The bedrock of character is integrity. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to recognize the direction of the Spirit and be obedient to it. Strong character is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. Your consistent exercise of faith builds strong character. In turn, fortified character expands your ability to exercise faith, thereby enhancing your capacity and confidence in conquering the trials of life. This strengthening cycle continues, for the more your character is fortified, the more capable you are to exercise the power of faith.

Wherever you live, whatever your occupation or focus in life, you will be drawn into the battle for the souls of men and women. Be

valiant in that struggle. It is waged on the basis of character. Satan and his troops have defined their character by resolute opposition to the will of our Father and consistent violation of His commandments. Your character is being solidified by consistent correct choices. Such character has permitted you to benefit from the privilege of a BYU education. Throughout life you will be rewarded from the efforts you have expended here. So many want to have the opportunity that has been yours, but they will not enjoy it. Show your gratitude by serving well in life.

Neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing character. Only you could do that through disobedience. That is why Satan is so intently focused on tempting you to make decisions that will undermine your character. Satan is an accomplished master at making devastating choices appear attractive, even reasonable. So be careful. At this critical time of life you will be faced with many choices. The decisions you will make will profoundly affect life now and for eternity. Make them wisely and prayerfully.

There are two patterns for making decisions in life: (1) *decisions based upon circumstance* and (2) *decisions based upon eternal truth*. Satan encourages choices to be made according to the circumstances. That is: What are others doing? What seems to be socially or politically acceptable? What will bring the quickest, most satisfying response? That pattern gives Lucifer the broadest opportunity to tempt an individual to make decisions that will be harmful and destructive, even though they may appear most appealing when a decision is made. With this approach there is no underlying set of values or standards to consistently guide decisions. Each one is made for what appears to be the most attractive choice at the moment. One who chooses this path cannot expect the help of the Lord but is left to his or her own strength and that of others who want to help. Sadly, most of God's children make decisions that way. That is why the world is in such turmoil.

The pattern of the Lord is for His children to make decisions based upon eternal truth. This requires that your life continue to be centered in the commandments of God. Thus decisions are made in accordance with unchanging truths aided by prayer and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. You have learned how well that works here at BYU. In addition to your own strength and capacity you will enjoy divine inspiration and power when needed. Your actions will be predictable and bless the lives of all in the circle of your influence. You will have a meaningful life of purpose, peace, and happiness.

There is no guarantee that life will be easy for anyone. We grow and learn more rapidly by facing and overcoming challenges. You are here to prove yourself, to develop, and to overcome. There will be constant challenges that cause you to think, to make proper judgments, and to act righteously. You will grow from them. However, there are some challenges you never need to encounter. They are those associated with serious transgression. As you continue to avoid such tragedy, your life will be simpler and happier. You will see others around you who don't make that choice, who do things that are wrong and evil and bring sadness. Thank your Father in Heaven that your pattern of life is different and that you have been helped to make choices guided by the Holy Ghost. That prompting will keep you on the right path.

Each of you has chosen to make decisions based upon eternal truth or you would not be here today. Please never allow yourself to make an exception to that pattern of life to gain a temporary, appealing advantage or to participate in an experience you know to be unworthy. I have seen so many young couples and individuals fumble the ball of life because they look to the wrong sources for how to live. They become distracted from true principles by being tempted to compromise just a little bit to gain influence, position, or acceptability.

They justify those deviations, rationalizing that later a greater good could be accomplished. In the long run that pattern of life will take you where you definitely do not want to be.

How can you keep your resolve to live worthily? How can you be sure that determination in your heart will not be eroded by the pressures around you? If you are blessed to be married, rejoice in that companionship and with your children. Let there be absolutely no secrets kept from each other. That will provide powerful insurance for continuing righteousness and happiness. Decide issues together. Keep the gospel light burning brightly in your home through scripture study, prayer, and the other things you know how to do. Honor and live temple covenants as you receive them. Drink deeply from the fountain of the revealed word of God. Hold fast to His word. Keep the Sabbath day holy. In short, continue to do what you know you should do. Wherever you go, stay tightly connected to the Church and consistently serve in it. While single, keep these same objectives as they apply.

As an exceptional son or daughter of God, you are sorely needed. There is an urgent need for more men and women like you who will stand for principles against the growing pressures to compromise those very principles. Men and women are needed who will act nobly and courageously for what the Lord has defined as right—not for what is politically correct or socially acceptable. We need individuals who have the spiritual, righteous influence that will motivate others to live honorably. We need statesmen with integrity, businessmen who are honest and morally clean, attorneys who defend justice and the legal system, and government officials who preserve principle because it is right. Above all, we need mothers and fathers who will preserve the sanctity and safety of the home and the integrity of the family in which faith in God and obedience to His commandments are taught as the foundation of a productive life.

You who are gathered here can be an essential part of that shining light, that righteous influence to increase the moral fiber of this nation and its homes. Many of your friends live their life for the moment. They do not understand the need for principles, eternal laws, and truth. They have been brought up in an environment in which decisions are made on the basis of today's circumstances or tomorrow's opportunities for gain. Show them a better life—a better way. There are some things that are wrong because God decreed they are wrong. Truth is not determined by what men think, no matter how influential they may be. Truth was determined by an Almighty God before the creation of this earth. Truth will exist unchanged forever.

Oh, there can be transitory euphoria from power, influence, or material wealth, but true, lasting happiness, the kind that is felt in the early hours of the morning when you are truly honest with yourself, is won only by obedience to the teachings of God. You must have honesty, integrity, chastity, virtue, and a willingness to forego something attractive—even apparently desirable for the moment—for a greater good in the future. I speak of the willingness when circumstance demands we lay everything on the altar to follow true principles.

I would like to suggest to you ten specific things that have been selected to help you be successful in the plan the Lord would have you follow beyond your graduation.

First, establish a set of principles by which you will guide every aspect of your life—in your home, in your Church service, in your profession, in the community. Many people try to compartmentalize their lives and have a standard for Church and another standard for what they do in business and in other aspects of their life. I very strongly counsel you not to do that. There really is only one set of standards that make sense. Those are the teachings of Jesus Christ, which signal to us

the importance of faith, service, obedience, and integrity.

Second, don't make exceptions to your standards. Never compromise them. One of the ways the Lord protects us is to give us guidance in life. One of the ways Satan tries to destroy us is to subtly lead us away from what we know is centrally important in our life. I lived in Washington, D.C., for much of my life, and I recall on occasion men coming to that city who had been elected as representatives of the government and who were members of the Church. Some of them used the teachings of the Savior throughout their careers and became great servants. Others early in their careers began to reason, "If we were better friends with others and were better understood, we would receive positions that would put us in a place where we could serve better." They began to make small exceptions to the standards by which they knew they should guide their lives. Few even remember them. They lost because they made exceptions to standards. Don't make that mistake.

Be loyal to the teachings that you have received here and have received from your parents. They are the things of greatest worth. I know that in your mind now there is high priority on the formal education you received here. If you integrate that with what you know about the teachings of the Lord and the examples of those worthy people who are role models to you, you will have a solid foundation and you will be productive and do things that are worthwhile for others.

Third, be loyal. Be loyal to this campus, to what it has taught you. Be loyal to your parents, your loved ones. And, above all, be loyal to Jesus Christ, the Savior. Success comes when your actions are consistent with the teachings of the Lord. When you seek work, find something that challenges you, that raises you to higher levels of performance. It may be harder, but you will grow, develop better, and produce more worthwhile good. You really have no

idea yet who you are and what you can accomplish in life. The fact that you have been able to come to this campus is evidence that you have great potential far beyond what you can imagine today.

Fourth, live so that the Lord can guide you to where He wants you to serve. Some will return to your native areas where you were born and where you grew up. This is a seedbed of leadership that we need for the Church to build the kingdom. Let the Lord guide you to where He wants you to be. He can do that if you live His commandments worthily and strive in every way to be obedient to His teachings.

Fifth, serve others. Sharing what you know with others will bring you happiness and bless their lives.

Sixth, smile. I don't need to teach you that. Just being on this campus teaches the importance of knowing how to smile and enjoy life. I don't mean by that that you need to be cracking jokes every day. But a good joke now and then is an escape valve. It is not all that bad. You will soon learn that everybody has problems and nobody wants to hear about yours. Put those things aside and smile. Have a good sense of humor as the prophets do. I wish I could tell you some of the things that we talk about. Not flippant things, not things that are inappropriate—just a good sense of humor. Today we are a little more serious than usual, but I will tell you a secret of how to wake up in the morning with a smile on your face no matter how you feel. Now I'll have to whisper, because this is a secret. If you want to wake up in the morning guaranteed to have a smile on your face, go to bed with a coat hanger in your mouth. Remember, a good sense of humor helps you greatly.

Seventh, don't complain. Life isn't always fair. That's a fact. But it's always charged with marvelous opportunities if you know how to find them. I remember once when I was working as hard as I knew how. I happened to be

working for a man who took all of the ideas and suggestions and work that I did and passed them on to his superior as though they were his own suggestions. For a while I was really upset about that. As I pondered it, a thought came to me, and I decided from then on I would write reports to him of everything that I was doing or trying to do, and I sent a copy to his boss. He didn't like that, but it worked beautifully.

Eighth, always have a Church assignment. I don't mean by that that you should ask for a particular calling, but wherever you go in the world, wherever the Lord takes you, always offer your service to the presiding authority. Leave it to that authority to decide where and how. Be connected with the things of God and the ways to serve Him.

The last two are the most important.

Ninth, go to the temple. Carry a current temple recommend. There may be a few in the graduating class who will want to wait to go to the temple when they go with their companion to be sealed. But virtually every other one in this graduating class should obtain and keep a temple recommend. It will keep you spiritually in tune, will allow you to remember the most important things of life, and will encourage you to give great service to others.

Tenth, use the Savior Jesus Christ as your example for life. Use His teachings as your handbook for life. Never make exceptions to them.

Will you prayerfully consider what we have discussed together? There are many willing to be led by your righteous example. Because you have been enlightened, you owe it to those who follow the best example you are capable of giving. Not only will they be blessed, but your life will be enriched as well. Come to know of the great influence for good that flows from individual acts born of conscience and principle rooted in truth. Resolve that each moment of your life will be reflected in your determination to humbly be an example of righteousness, integrity, and conviction. With

such a life you will succeed in the purpose for which you came to earth.

I began this message indicating that I have validated in my personal life the truth of the principles shared. There have been times when my choice to stand for principle against strong forces implied that there would be significant personal loss by taking that action. But that did not deter me. I was determined to do what was right. The anticipated loss, however, never came. Somehow, doing what was right in time opened far greater and more meaningful opportunities. I testify that you will never go wrong when you trust in the Lord and in His promises, no matter how severe the challenge.

May I share an experience with you? I served with Admiral Rickover, a very demanding individual. When I was called to be a mission president, he tried to dissuade me from going. When I said it was a prophet of God who had called me, he said, "If that's the way Mormons are, I'm not going to have any of them working in my program." I knew there were many families in Idaho depending on work in that program, and I was concerned about it.

As I prayed, a song came to my mind: "Do what is right; let the consequence follow" ("Do What Is Right," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 237). I did that. I couldn't see how some of the challenges we faced would be worked out the way I hoped they would be with the individual who would come to replace me, but "do what is right; let the consequence follow." It all worked out very well.

When Admiral Rickover knew I was going to leave on a mission, he had said he never wanted to see me again and never wanted to talk to me again. On the final day of my working with him, I asked for an appointment. The secretary gasped, expecting that there was going to be an explosion.

I went in, and he said, "Scott, sit down. What do you have? I've tried every way I can

to change your decisions. What is it that you've got?"

I handed him a copy of the Book of Mormon and said, "Admiral, I believe in God. And I believe that when we do the best we can, He will help us."

Then Admiral Rickover said something that I didn't ever expect to hear. He said, "When you finish your mission, I want you to come back and work with me."

"Do what is right; let the consequence follow."

May the Lord strengthen your resolve, your exercise of faith, and your use of growing character so that you may be the instrument of good He wants you to be. I testify

that He lives. As you worthily seek His help, He will guide you in your life. I testify of that with every capacity that I possess. Jesus Christ lives. He guides His work on earth. As apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have experiences that are very sacred that allow us to bear our testimony of His name and of His power. I do that with deep conviction. Jesus Christ loves you. He will guide you in your life. In times of great challenge, when you are perplexed about which turn to take, kneel down and ask your Father in Heaven to bless you, and let your faith in the Savior and His Atonement be the rock and foundation of a successful life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.