

Goals and Family Life

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This is a beautiful sight. As I return to BYU and have the privilege of greeting you, I am filled within my heart with many apprehensions. I'd feel much more at home if we were having a zone conference. As I look here in the front, I see that your leaders here at the Y have understood that, and so they've lined up several missionaries so that I'd feel at home. I do appreciate that!

Importance of Goals

I want to talk to you today about a family-related topic, and it's called goals. The family is the most important unit in time or in eternity. An individual can only be exalted through an effective, righteous family unit. This truth places upon each of us the responsibility to become contributors to the effectiveness of our family units. I believe that's one of the things President Kimball had in mind when he made the following statement to the Regional Representatives as they were meeting concerning missionary work in 1975. I've taken his statement and adapted it to our situation this morning. These are the words of President Kimball:

Now I want to say something about . . . productivity—particularly goals. . . . We do believe in set-

ting goals. We live by goals. . . . Our total existence is goal oriented. . . . We must have goals to make progress, encouraged by keeping records. . . . Progress is easier when it is timed, checked and measured. . . . I believe in goals, but I believe that the individual must set his own. Goals should always be made to a point that will make us reach and strain. Success should not necessarily be gauged by always reaching the goal set, but by progress and attainment. Therefore, I think we should use the goal system to its proper conclusion.

To my way of thinking, that proper conclusion seems to be in obtaining an exalted eternal life. That conclusion can only be realized, then, in the eternal family unit. That being the case, each of us must set goals which would help us to be effective family members—husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters. When daily goals are set with this eternal perspective in mind, an individual is more likely to enjoy living. Greater satisfaction will come from doing what might

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otherwise be considered as routine or mundane tasks. Such an approach to living requires one to look beneath the surface of everyday affairs and associations.

Education and Business Goals

Students have goals—you know, the goals of good grades, graduation, degrees, marriage. You may achieve all of those goals and then wonder why you're not happy or wonder why you haven't been satisfied with the accomplishment. What is missing that should have brought about the success that you were seeking? Well, these goals that have been mentioned, of course, may be worthwhile goals—and they are—but true satisfaction will only come when the accomplishment of those goals is related to the objective of immortality and eternal life.

I once had the opportunity of speaking with some young insurance executives—two young men who had been very successful in their work. One of them attended this institution, just as you are. Another attended another institution in this state. I was interested in their stories because they seemed so similar. They both went to college looking for a wife. (So I want you to know, President Oaks, that this isn't the only institution where young men come to find their eternal companions!) But they were looking for certain things in their wives. Each indicated that he wanted to find a wife who was virtuous, one who had a love in her heart for other people, one who had eternal goals as her foremost concern. Each wanted to find a wife who could have an interest in him. Then they explained what that interest meant. Each of them indicated separately that that interest had to be expressed in requiring of them, these young men, more than they could expect from themselves. One of them put it this way: "After we were married, my wife let me know that I hadn't reached the end of the road yet. I still had some improving to do, and then she proceeded to show me. I'm

grateful that she had that kind of courage because then her true beauty came forth."

Sometimes when we're associating with each other on this campus or any other campus we may be tempted to look only at the surface of our relationship with others and their appearance. These young men have shown that you have to look beneath the surface. You have to look to what people are really made of in terms of testimony, in terms of desires and goals that will reach the eternal objectives of eternal life. They said they went to school to obtain three things: one, to find an eternal companion; two, to prepare themselves to care for their families; and, three, to prepare in such a way as to be able to have time to serve the Lord. Those are worthwhile goals. As I talked with them I discovered that their success in life had come at a price—the price of trying to keep in mind, always, their eternal objective.

Just this last year each of these young men qualified for one of the top honors of his company. One of them said he couldn't understand why he didn't gain the satisfaction he had anticipated from such an achievement. And then he was asked by one of his employers to consider why he had been able to make such great sales. He decided it was due to the fact that he had prepared himself. He knew where to go to find the people, he knew what procedures to use, and pretty soon selling someone insurance became a matter of routine. He couldn't quite understand why that shouldn't bring success, because on paper, he said, he looked great. But inwardly he didn't feel so great. Then his boss asked him another question: "Have you considered *why* you're selling the insurance? What is it you want your families to receive as a result of that sale?" He said that only then did he realize true achievement could only come through service. That brought him back to his eternal objective, to do the will of his Heavenly Father, to serve others. As soon as he realized that, he got things back in focus. Then he began to realize not only success but

also a feeling of accomplishment and achievement in success.

Missionary Goals

I'd like to tell you about another experience with goals. These missionaries who are here will appreciate this because they've had to ride on bicycles or walk; at least, they've had the opportunity to be challenged physically to accomplish a goal, and they've been challenged spiritually as well. I title this story "The Watermelon Bust," and I think you'll see why it was a bust. I know the missionary who had this experience won't mind my telling it because it was a faith-promoting experience for him. It seems that two missionaries were riding along on their bikes one day on their way to contact some people and came across a man who had a truckload of watermelons. They got to thinking about that and stopped, went over, and looked at the watermelons. One of them said, "Hmm, I wonder what he'd take for that load of watermelons?" Finally he asked the man, "What'll you take for that load of watermelons?" And the man must have said something like "What'll you offer?"

The missionary looked at his limited resources, and the most valuable possession that he had was his source of transportation. So he said, "How about my bike?"

The man with the watermelons said, "Sold." So the missionary traded him his bike for the load of watermelons. His companion must have looked at him with wonderment in his eyes, asking, "Now what will we do?" they had the man take the truckload of watermelons over to their apartment. I don't know if you've ever seen the size of a missionary apartment, but trying to fit a truckload of watermelons in there along with everything else is not always easy. Well, that's what they did. They packed those watermelons up the steps, up to that little apartment, and nearly filled it. The man put the bicycle in his truck and drove away.

Now, the missionaries had some good objectives in this, I think. The idea was, as I understand it, "We'll sell these watermelons, and then we'll both be able to buy new bikes! Wouldn't that be great to have a new bike to go around on? Especially great." But I think you can see the result. They never sold very many watermelons—two or three out of a truckload. Can you imagine what they ate for the next month? Well, the watermelons didn't quite last a month. Some of them couldn't be eaten.

This is a story of goals. Sometimes we find that there are rather ridiculous things we get into that deter us, take us away from the determined objectives we had in mind, and sometimes fog our attention to the degree that we ask ourselves, "Now, why did I do that?" I'm sure those missionaries may have asked themselves that question many times. It just goes to point out the need to have always in mind that eternal objective and then to measure your goals or to line up your goals in terms of that objective. Then the way will be clear, and you will be less likely to do ridiculous things and to fall into the trap of the "Why did I do that?" question.

There's another lesson I learned about goals in terms of missionaries and their families. You could always tell when a missionary was getting the spirit of his mission because he'd begin to talk about his family, how important they were to him, what kinds of feelings came to him in terms of his relationship to his father and mother. It was amazing to many missionaries how much their parents learned in such a short time. "Why, I've only been in the mission field four months, and already my father's changed his whole opinion." Well, I think you know whose opinion was changing, whose perspective of life had been broadened and increased.

Some missionaries learn also that there's a difference between seeking a position and seeking service. I don't think that's unlike

most of us in our everyday life. If we find ourselves seeking for position, we may miss the opportunity to serve. An example: As I sat in my mission office, interviewing some missionaries on their way home, I was very surprised at a young man's answer to my question "Tell me about your mission. Tell me how you feel. You're on your way home; you've been successful. Tell me about your mission."

His reply was, "I'm sorry, President. I'm sorry that I failed."

I could hardly believe it! I said, "What do you mean, failed?"

"Well," he said, "I had as my goal to become an assistant to you."

I didn't smile. I kind of hurt inside. I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Well, it's obvious that a man isn't successful unless he can become a mission president's assistant." Then we talked about what really brought success in the mission field. We talked about where he had really served, and that that was the measure of success, not the position he had held. During the next several months I came across four or five other young men with this same feeling—that they'd failed because they hadn't gained the position of assistant to the mission president. Their goal had been shortsighted.

Positions of responsibility come about as a natural byproduct of our service, of being able to see an objective clearly, and that objective is that which the Lord would have us do. When we are determined to do that, then our opportunities become many and our service becomes increased. Our satisfaction in our service becomes long-lasting, not just momentary.

I think of another missionary who came to us before we left on our mission. He said, "If you ever get an opportunity to talk to missionaries, you might tell them my story." Now, that was interesting—I wondered what his story was. He said he thought all missionaries ought to hear about it. This is what he said: I was a failure on my mission. I only

participated in one baptism. I had been in the mission field two weeks, and we baptized a fellow that I hadn't even taught. During the remainder of my mission I had no baptisms. I worked hard, but I never got anyone to be baptized. I came home a failure, and had been one for seventeen years. Then in the early hours of the morning I received a telephone call. At the other end of the line was a woman's voice. Her words were startling to me. She said, "Is this Elder Bradford?"

"Which Bradford do you mean?"

"Is this the Bradford who was on a mission in Texas about seventeen or eighteen years ago?"

"Well, yes."

"You may not remember me," she said, "but you and your companion came to my door, and you bore your testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You said that there was a Savior, and at that moment there came into my heart an understanding of what you'd said. My testimony began right then, but I was too fearful to continue. I just wanted to call you and let you know that I have just been baptized. I thought you might be interested." That young man had been a success, not because that woman became baptized. She was but an evidence of the effectiveness of his teaching. How many others did not bother to call? How many others received his service and grew without ever knowing how to contact him or let him know of their success and their achievement in coming into the Lord's kingdom?

Your lives are like the life of that missionary. As you go about doing the things that our Heavenly Father would have you do, as you keep foremost in your attention achieving your purpose here in life—which is to be a true son or daughter of our Heavenly Father, to bring yourself before him worthily, to receive the greatest blessing that he can give, eternal life—you affect the lives of other people for the better. That's the importance of having goals to live by.

Family Goals

I think also of the experience of my wife and me and our family. We began just as you are. I recall coming here as a freshman. I was twenty-three years old as a freshman. I knew right away I had to get married in a hurry! I saw all these young people on the campus; I felt like an old man at twenty-three. Then I found a lovely young lady who had a testimony of the truth and who didn't care if I was old—she still agreed! Well, we were married while I was a freshman, and we had some goals that we set: some of them were voiced, some of them were kind of within our hearts and never really expressed openly to each other, but there was one goal that we set that I'm very proud of—the goal that we would be a family, that she would be home, and that she would care for the home and the children. You know, when you're living on \$84 a month, sometimes that's not easy. But then we got a raise and I went up to \$110 a month. We felt better, but then of course we had our first child, and he pretty well took the \$20 a month that we earned. But that goal of being a family was very important to us and we held to it.

We also had a goal to graduate, and we did it. I say "we" because I'm very sure that my graduation was as much my wife's fault as it was mine! When we graduated and took our first job, we thought now's the time—we'll go out in the world and make some money. Then we'll really be able to live. We discovered when we got out in the world that money didn't go any farther there than it did on campus. In fact, sometimes I wondered if it went as far.

One day my wife asked me a staggering question that startled me a little bit. She said, "Now, Rex, what are you really going to be?"

I kind of laughed because I thought, "What do you mean, 'What am I really going to be?' I'm a teacher. I teach in the school right across the street. Surely you can see what I'm going to be!"

But she wasn't content with that kind of an answer. She said, "What do you really want to be? What are your goals, your objectives in life?" I realized that I had never shared them with her. It kind of hurt, and I realized that it had probably hurt her as well. So we talked about our family and then decided what we'd have to do with our lives in order to accomplish that. Our desire was to be of service to the Lord and be where he wanted us to be when he wanted us to be there. Well, in order to accomplish that we had to have an income, and so we set our goals in line with that thinking. It meant moving, and we did. It meant being in school for thirteen years—just thought I'd encourage those of you who have been here a day or two! My children thought that that's all daddy did—go to school. He went to school in the morning to teach, and he went to school at night to learn. Daddy was always going to school as far as they were concerned. But those goals were secondary to family, secondary to maintaining the family unit. We discovered something, my young friends. We discovered that the Lord has plans for you, too. As long as your plans are consistent with the eternal objectives, then the plans of the Lord can be manifest in your own lives. With that in mind, may I suggest some things that you may do to help you set goals properly.

Guidelines for Setting Correct Goals

First, would you prayerfully consider the selection of each goal? Brother Neal Maxwell put it this way. He said that we should prayerfully ponder the probable results of each goal we select. I like that idea of looking at the *result* of the goal, not just the goal itself. Joseph Smith taught us that the Great Jehovah has a grand design for this earth and for those who inhabit it. In fact, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* tells us that all of the good gifts, the great accomplishments that men have received in the earth or have come up with in the earth, are the result of the blessing of the Lord—

intelligence and light that have come from him (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 250–51). If you would accomplish something great, confer, will you, with the Creator? Prayerfully seek the direction of the Lord in the selection of your goals.

Second, when you select a goal, will you let it be a useful one? A useful goal ought to be one that is practical and can either apply to your present needs or prepare you to meet future needs—or at least aid you in broadening your understanding. When you do that, the goal can provide you with an input of success from many different areas. You won't have to get success from only one avenue of endeavor to know that you've succeeded. There will be many sources of confidence that come to you as a result of goals that help you to grow in many directions. This will also be a way for you to improve the talents you already possess and perhaps discover a few more you might have.

Third, would you write down the goals you select? If you write them down, they're more likely to reach the action stage than to remain in the wishful thinking or just "resolved" stage. To show you how important having them written down is, would you refer to the statement by Stonewall Jackson? This statement is inscribed at the entrance to the Virginia Military Institute: "You may be whatever you resolve to be." Put that resolve in writing and then keep it somewhere where you can refer to it so that you can check your progress and keep yourself reminded you do have that goal. I'm reminded of some missionaries again in that regard: they had a "goal board" in their apartment. They liked to write down on the board what their goals for the week were, such as "Baptize the Jones family by Saturday." They had been working with the Jones family for a long time. It seemed that Brother and Sister Jones were giving them a ride back to their apartment on that particular day, and as they came to the apartment they

asked the missionaries if they could use their telephone. They didn't know how brave they were to go into the missionaries' apartment! But the missionaries were even braver, because they let them come in! When they came in, Sister Jones (I guess we'd call her "sister" whether she's a member or not) came over by the phone. There was this "goal board," and she read, "Baptize the Jones family by Saturday." She looked at her husband, pointed it out to him, and then said, "You boys really mean business, don't you?" One elder replied, "You have to set your goals or you'll never achieve them." The Jones family was baptized on Saturday!

Fourth, goals receive a commitment from us when they are shared with someone else. If you want a goal to be effective in your life, share it with someone. The Lord does that. He requires that we share our goals with him and make commitments with him. Baptism is just one of those ways. Because the sharing of goals is an expression of faith, we're more likely to exercise faith in the accomplishment of that goal. So share your goal with someone and make a commitment to accomplish that goal.

Last of all, let's talk about motivation in the achievement of that goal. True motivation to achieve comes from a desire to serve the Lord. If you can see in each of the goals you select an opportunity to improve your ability to serve the Lord—which includes, of course, serving his children, and the first ones of his children that you must serve are your family members—then you'll receive a desire to achieve that cannot be obtained in any other way. That motivation will be lasting because it will bring a continuing feeling of satisfaction. When I say "service," I don't mean just "service at convenience" because that's not service at all. That's only a self-serving activity. Service requires sacrifice. Joseph Smith said it this way: "Unless you belong to a church that requires sacrifice of all that you possess, everything that you have and are, even at perhaps the cost of your

life, unless you belong to such a church as that, that church could never build within you the faith that you need to obtain eternal life." Yes, service requires sacrifice and *then* motivation is assured.

Let us return to the statement of President Kimball about goals and goal setting. He said that each of us must set our own goals. Your goals may be particularly important to you and you alone, but when you share a goal with our Heavenly Father it becomes an eternal objective and will take you toward that great goal of eternal life.

Goals should always be made to a point that will make us reach and strain. Success should not necessarily be gauged by always reaching the goals

set, but by progress and attainment. Therefore, I think we should use the goal system to its proper conclusion. [President Spencer W. Kimball, Regional Representatives Seminar, April 1975]

It is my prayer that each of us will accept the goal that our Heavenly Father has set as our guiding and overall goal—immortality and eternal life with him. May each of us have the conviction in our hearts to set goals that are meaningful in light of that great objective. I can promise you that as you do the Spirit of the Lord will come into your life and there shall be an even greater satisfaction and joy come to you in this life as you prepare for the great joy of eternal life hereafter, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.