

# *Your Future*

CECIL O. SAMUELSON

**A**s summer comes to a close and we embark on a new semester, I welcome all of you to Brigham Young University. We are delighted to have those of you here for the first time and grateful for those of you returning. This is a wonderful place, and this is an exciting time to be here.

At BYU we speak often and regularly of our historic past. We do so because we benefit so very much from lessons previously learned and sacrifices made. We must never forget that we figuratively eat fruit grown on trees we did not plant, drink from wells we did not dig, learn and live in buildings we did not build, and are warmed by fires for which we did not provide fuel (see Deuteronomy 6:10–12). All that we experience is made so much better and satisfying because those of previous times and generations cared not only for their present but also for the future—our present. It is for this reason that today I want to spend our minutes together in considering our futures.

For almost all of us at Brigham Young University, our future is not only a curiosity but also a fact of our doctrine. We are a millennial people, meaning that we believe the living Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, will literally come again and reside upon the earth. The Millennium will be a long time, a thou-

sand years by our current standards, but will in the grand scheme be a relatively short period because we understand that all people will eventually be granted immortality and those who have earned it will have eternal life (see Moses 1:39). Thus we will live a very long time and our future will be greatly extended beyond what we can conceive in our current state. Because we will live forever, it seems obvious that we must be concerned about our future both proximately and distally.

Some think about the future, if they consider it at all, in rather fatalist terms. That is, they live and act as if the days to come have already been predetermined for them. They have not! Others seem to feel that what they do or do not do today or tomorrow can be fully compensated for with what some have described as “deathbed repentance.” This is likewise a dangerous and largely erroneous point of view.

Happily, many of you believe the decisions you now make are real and have either a positive or a negative impact on your future in both mortality and the eternities. I believe you are

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*Cecil O. Samuelson was president of Brigham Young University when this devotional address was given on 8 September 2009.*

right and encourage you to act and perform as you think and believe.

Very soon you will be focused—as you should be—on the first examinations of the semester. Living today is very important because who you are now is greatly influenced by your past life, just as your future is affected by your present experiences. In a very real sense, our entire lives are like our years as college students. At the end, we will all be different than we were at the beginning, and what we do along the way has a great deal to do with our possibilities and eventual outcomes.

Recently I had the opportunity of joining other General Authorities in attending a celebration for President Thomas S. Monson on the occasion of his 82nd birthday. In his remarks that day, he referred to a favorite song of years ago, “Que Sera, Sera.” I remember it well and still hear it from time to time. When I was just beginning high school (back in ancient history for most of you!), Doris Day, a well-liked actress and singer of the time, made this song very popular. In it is found some wisdom but also some false doctrine.

Don’t worry. I don’t plan to sing it, but I want to share the words.

*When I was just a little girl,  
I asked my mother, “What will I be?  
Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?”  
Here’s what she said to me:*

*“Que sera, sera.  
Whatever will be, will be.  
The future’s not ours to see.  
Que sera, sera.  
What will be, will be.”*

*When I grew up and fell in love,  
I asked my sweetheart, “What lies ahead?  
Will we have rainbows day after day?”  
Here’s what my sweetheart said:*

*“Que sera, sera.  
Whatever will be, will be.  
The future’s not ours to see.  
Que sera, sera.  
What will be, will be.”*

*Now I have children of my own.  
They ask their mother, “What will I be?  
Will I be handsome? Will I be rich?”  
I tell them tenderly:*

*“Que sera, sera.  
Whatever will be, will be.  
The future’s not ours to see.  
Que sera, sera.  
What will be, will be.”*  
[“Que Sera, Sera” (“What Will Be, Will Be”),  
Jay Livingston and Ray Evans, 1956]

There is significant truth in the notion that much of what happens to us is unexpected and not in our control. However—and this is most vital and critical to understand—the things of greatest ultimate importance to us are largely in our control and are within the scope of our agency.

You might wish to rebut this assertion, and I can understand how you might do so with great sincerity and conviction. You could accurately mention that if you develop cancer or some other horrible illness, it was not your choice or your fault. You would be correct.

You could fairly point out that because of the selfishness of another, you could be seriously hurt physically, morally, or spiritually, and this also would not be your choice or your fault. You would still be correct.

You could, with precision, describe being in a generally appropriate place doing what you should be doing and still have your life taken or damaged through a natural disaster or act of war—none of which was predictable or under your control—and again you would be right.

When you get to be my age, you might report that, in spite of your best efforts, you

have not been able to meet your eternal companion or be blessed with children or fulfill some other righteous ambition or goal, and you could well be accurate in your assessment that this was not your fault.

While a student, you might observe that some people have not studied or worked as hard as you have but still get better grades or more impressive opportunities. Other friends might have more pleasant or helpful roommates or study partners. You know students who seem to be able to eat all they want and not gain weight or folks who you might deem to be less nice or attractive who have more dates. This list of unfair occurrences not under your control is almost endless.

I would agree with all of these observations and most of the others that would readily come to mind. Life is not fair or equal. Notwithstanding our best efforts, things rarely, if ever, turn out exactly the way we would expect, predict, or desire. Life is full of great surprises, both happy and sad. Nevertheless, I stand by my assertion that you are really and quite completely in control of those things of ultimate importance.

What are the things of greatest importance? Your list and mine might vary on particular days or during specific seasons of our lives. We likely will be thinking about different things, with a far different hierarchy of significance, on the night before a consequential midterm examination when compared with the night before a big celebration or pending vacation trip. While immediately of great concern, most of these matters have little lasting value or compelling import when compared with things I will suggest to you are ultimately of the greatest importance. My list will not be comprehensive—in fact, our time together today allows me to identify only three—but if you take the matter seriously and personally, perhaps it will assist you in making your own roster of things of great magnitude.

First, I mention your relationships. These include your relationship with your Father in Heaven and His Son Jesus Christ. These associations are fundamental in their own right but also foundational for all of your other relationships. You must not only know but always remember that you are literally the spirit child of Heavenly Father and are known and loved by Him. Just as it was necessary for Him to leave his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, entirely on His own during the atonement process, He occasionally allows us to feel distance from Him for our own good or because of our own poor choices. However, we must never forget the actual substance of our relationship and the desire of the Father for us to return honorably to His presence. Likewise, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, has paid the very high price that compensates for our sins, weaknesses, and disappointments when we have otherwise done our very best.

Your family, although possibly imperfect in some ways, also encompasses a series of relationships of vital importance. Many of you don't need to be reminded of the centrality of the family in our lives and in our doctrine, but all of us need to be helped on occasion with the applications. Most of you are away from home for the first time, and this is an adjustment for you. Likewise, it is also a potentially difficult time for your parents and other family members. Make sure you don't forget them even when you don't need additional money urgently, and, above all, make sure that you love and honor them even when you see their struggles or perceived deficiencies. God loves you and expects that you likewise will love those of your family circle.

Because we are all children of Heavenly Father, we must have high regard for and good relationships with others. Even though you will differ with many people on matters of preference and principle, remember the injunction of the Savior to love other people.

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. [John 13:34–35]*

The last relationship of importance I will mention to you is with yourself. Be honest with yourself, including your failings, mistakes, and deficiencies, but also remember who you are. Allow me to transpose a little the words of Jesus: “Love yourself as you love your neighbor” (see Matthew 22:39). You won’t be successful in any of your other relationships if you don’t have a healthy sense of who you really are.

Second, your covenants are of utmost importance both now and forever. Keeping them is a fundamental component of your integrity and of your relationship with heaven. For those of us blessed to be at BYU, the Honor Code is a covenant we have made, in addition to those we make as Church members. As hard as it is to qualify and make sacred covenants, keeping them and enduring to the end is also arduous and demanding. As you have been reminded, holding on to the iron rod (see 1 Nephi 8) has never been more vital or necessary than it is in today’s world.

In the future some of our company today will feel disappointed or cheated because, through no fault of their own, they have not been able to complete all the covenants they would like to make and receive all of the attendant blessings. Make and keep all the sacred covenants you appropriately can and God will open the way for you to make and enjoy the others you desire either later in this life or in the next.

Third, handling your commitments now and in the near future, including the rest of your mortal life, will have a great impact on who you are and what you will become. Make your word your bond. Never represent another’s work as your own. Be one known as absolutely

dependable and reliable. Loyalty is a major component of each of the relationships I’ve just mentioned and is also a large part of the covenants and commitments into which you enter. Just as we learn “line upon line,” our responsibilities and their associated commitments also increase over time. Most of you are young adults and are experiencing both more individual freedom and more personal responsibility than ever before. Small things like getting to class on time, doing your share of the dishwashing and floor sweeping in your living quarters, and helping those around you when you see the need and without being asked are vital. Likewise, important Church callings, your campus job, or significant assignments in BYUSA are opportunities both to learn and to demonstrate your capacity in handling adult duties and responsibilities. Rarely, if ever, is one entrusted with truly big opportunities and major accountability if he or she has not established a pattern of appropriately fulfilling lesser commitments, obligations, and tasks.

I hope this brief litany of things that affect your futures will be the cause of some careful reflection on what and where you need to direct your energy, your prayers, and your focus. Your futures are bright—brighter than most of you can currently imagine—because of who you are as children of God. He loves you, and we do, too. He has great confidence in your potential, and we also share that perspective. He has great expectations for you and of you, and we are grateful to be in your company and have the privilege of witnessing your growth and development in the relatively short time you are at Brigham Young University. You can make your futures be as bright as you wish in the truly important things. Be sure to keep them in mind and not become distracted by the many temptations and diversions that will envelope you if you allow them to do so.

As I conclude, let me again reflect with you on the popular song of more than 50 years ago, “Que Sera, Sera.” With great apologies to Ray

Evans and Jay Livingston, who wrote the words to this piece, and because I am certainly not a composer of either lyrics or music, I would like to suggest a final verse just for us here that might clarify my views on our futures:

*Now that I've grown older,  
The future's more clear to me.  
Some things I can't predict or control,  
But I can become what I need to be.*

Heavenly Father does live and loves you. He not only wants you to succeed but has enabled

you to do so with His help and that of the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. This is Their work, and you are very important in our joint goal with Them, which is for all of us to achieve eternal life. We have been and now are being led by living apostles and prophets with President Thomas S. Monson as our beloved current president and prophet leader.

We are glad you are at BYU and pray for your success and continued growth during this new, exciting academic year. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.