

# *Treasure the Day*

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Today is January 8, 2008, and the beginning of a new semester at Brigham Young University. I always look forward to the start of a new year with great anticipation, wondering what the days will bring as the year unfolds. I do know that this beautiful campus will be filled with the excitement and activity that always occur when you are here. Each day can provide experiences that can make your time at BYU the means to achieving your goals and the righteous desires of your hearts.

Each of you has taken a different pathway that has resulted in your attending Brigham Young University. You have come from all over the world and represent many different nations and cultures. For some of you, it is your first time at BYU. For others, this semester is a continuation of your schooling at this institution. I believe that the Lord has, in His loving and caring way, opened the door for you to enter this university. The Lord has told you that He will open doors to bless your lives if you remember Him. In Revelation 3:8 we read, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

It is now your opportunity to immerse yourself in the BYU experience and take advantage

of all that is available for you in learning things spiritual and temporal, serving and caring, and enhancing your testimonies of the teachings of the Savior, whose birth we have just celebrated. The Lord has stated that He will continue to open doors for you if you remember Him and keep His commandments.

Brigham Young once said, "Education is the power to think clearly, the power to act well in the world's work, and the power to appreciate life" (quoted by George H. Brimhall in "The Brigham Young University," *Improvement Era*, vol. 23, no. 9 [July 1920], 831). I especially am drawn to the last part of his definition: "the power to appreciate life."

When my husband and I were first married, he was an undergraduate student with a goal of attending medical school, and I was teaching sixth grade. His classes, part-time work, and studies obviously took most of his time. My obligations with work and spending evenings doing all that was necessary to fulfill my teaching responsibilities also took many hours to complete. Once we included our Church callings, we didn't have much time together

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*Sharon G. Samuelson, wife of BYU president Cecil O. Samuelson, delivered this devotional on 8 January 2008.*

during the week. I found that I was always looking forward to Friday evenings, when not only would things become more relaxed but we could have some time together as well as a little social life during the weekends. I always seemed to have the “thank goodness it’s Friday” mentality. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays I was always looking forward to the weekends; thus I was not really enjoying the weekdays. I was happy on Friday nights, Saturdays, and Sundays and a little depressed on the weekdays.

However, one day something occurred that caused me to see this negative outlook in a new light. I can’t recall what caused this change in my attitude, but I was struck with the thought that by wanting the weekdays to pass by quickly and always looking forward to the weekends, I was wishing a very important part of my life away. I realized that my time *now* was valuable and I should appreciate every day—not wish it away! After all, I didn’t know how many Mondays through Fridays I had in my future. Time passes quickly enough, and, because I wanted it to do so, I did not take full advantage of some valuable opportunities and experiences that were available to me.

Concerning the days of your lives, Ralph Waldo Emerson once said:

*They are of the least pretension and of the greatest capacity of anything that exists. They come and go like muffled and veiled figures, sent from a distant friendly party; but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away.* [Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Works and Days,” *Society and Solitude*, 1870]

I still can vividly recall the time I realized that I should savor and treasure each day and be thankful for and appreciate life. I somehow realized that each day is a gift from a loving Heavenly Father and that if I did not view each day as such, I would be ungrateful. I was

always wanting tomorrow or, in my case, the weekend. This was a terrible thing because I was neglecting my todays for my tomorrows.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin put it best when he stated:

*One thing I know for certain: the time we have here goes by far too quickly. Don’t waste any more time sitting on the bench watching life pass you by.* [Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life,” *Ensign*, December 2000, 12]

Each of you has been given the opportunity to enter the door that opened to allow your entrance to BYU. It is now up to you to be grateful for and relish fully your life as a student here. An appreciation of each day and of life is dependent upon your ability to notice the things that make up those 24 hours. Most often the simple aspects of life may be considered dull and uninteresting. You may overlook the commonplace things that may appear meaningless and ordinary. You may thank your Heavenly Father for the very important or necessary parts of your lives, or what you may consider the “big” blessings, and then forget the “little” ones. Robert Frost expressed this thought in his poem “Dust of Snow” (1923):

*The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree*

*Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.*

On a day he already cursed because it had not likely been a happy one, something happened that at first added to his frustration. As the poet was going under a tree, some snow fell on him as it was knocked off a branch by a crow flying into the sky. At first filled with

anger, he looked up only to see the beauty of the black crow as it flew against the contrast of the sky in the background. To him it was a very precious and wonderful moment.

So it can be for you when you see all the beauty that exists in your lives. Gratitude for all that the Lord has given you enables you to appreciate life and treasure each day you have to spend in this earthly existence.

It is unrealistic to ignore that at times there are and will continue to be some days when it may seem impossible to appreciate that particular day and time. Days come where there is disappointment, tragedy, illness, pain, heartache, and suffering. You most likely will wish that that day, and often the days following, would just pass by quickly or that the circumstances causing the pain would never have happened. However, this is not the plan of our Heavenly Father. On days such as these, you must look to your Lord and Savior for sustenance, love, and His atoning sacrifice for all of you.

The life of the Prophet Joseph Smith gives us many examples of days of despair, pain, and sadness. While in Liberty Jail and in the depths of discouragement and tribulation, he was told by the Lord in Doctrine and Covenants 122:7 that “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”

Such it is for you that it needs be that you experience days of sorrow as well as days of joy to prepare you to one day return to your Father in Heaven’s presence. They are necessary for your eternal progression. These trials test your faith, endurance, and submission to the will of the Lord and are part of God’s plan for you.

The mission of a BYU education is to strengthen you spiritually, enlarge you intellectually, build your character, and help lead you to a lifetime of service. When your days are filled with lessons, activities, friends, the gospel, and a multitude of opportunities to serve and bless the lives of others, you can appreciate and treasure each day whether that day is

one of happiness and success or one of sadness and failure. Service and love are two important ingredients for one’s appreciation of life, and opportunities for both are in abundance in our university community.

Just as the Lord opened a door for you to be in this devotion today, He will continue to open more doors and will be a beacon of light to follow during your days here. He will make available opportunities and experiences that will enable you to achieve much that will bless your lives each day in areas both secular and temporal. When you seek and listen to the Spirit and follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, many blessings will be forthcoming. Your capacity for expanding your horizon of experiences during your time at BYU will be boundless if you but enter the doors that the Lord provides for you commensurate with your faith. In fact, He has said that these doors cannot be shut by others, but you can close them yourself if you choose to shut Him out of your life.

As you make your way on the paths of life, there will be many of these doors and opportunities attainable to you. Some you can anticipate being open as you make choices and decisions to lead you to them. However, some doors you really would like to open for you may not, and you cannot understand why they don’t.

I’m sure you can recall something you wanted to be or do or have that never came to fruition. At the time you may have been disappointed, sad, or even angry. The door never opened, and some others you would desire in the future may not as well. However, the Lord knows your needs and desires to a much greater extent than you do.

Some doors may not open at the exact time you desire, but they will open when the Lord sees fit, so you must put your trust in Him and in His wisdom and understanding. Marvelous gateways are opened when you keep the Lord’s word (see Revelation 3:8) and center

your life on the teachings of Jesus Christ. He teaches that your life is priceless and precious, and your gratitude and appreciation for it will bless your sojourn here.

My dear brothers and sisters, I hope that you will treasure each day during your time

as a student at Brigham Young University, whether it is measured in weeks, months, or years. Enjoy life; be happy; have fun; be productive; give service and love to others; and, especially, be faithful. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.