

“For Success in Life”
BYU Commencement Exercises
August 14, 2008

Elder Richard G. Scott, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

I am immensely grateful for this totally unexpected, extraordinary honor bestowed by Brigham Young University, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, and the Board and its officers, the First Presidency. I am in awe at the conferral of an honor so immensely significant and so profoundly appreciated. It is one thing to earn a degree through individual effort. For me it is far more significant that the constituted authorities determine that you qualify to receive one. I am at a total loss to find adequate words to convey the depth of my feelings of gratitude. I will ever strive to live so as not to undermine the enduring significance of the conferral of this honorary doctorate today.

One way to begin to express gratitude is by sharing with you students who graduate today some principles that have served me well and may provide meaningful help as you commence your post-graduate life. This day is the beginning of a fascinating journey for each of you. I will explain what I mean by an analogy.

In the greenhouse of a nursery, small seedlings are nurtured, carefully nourished, and watched over until they develop into a sapling that is better suited to face the challenges of growth in the world. Brigham Young University has served you in like manner. You have grown here. You have discovered talents and abilities, probably unknown to you previously. You now realize that this is just the beginning of an exciting, invigorating, productive, extraordinarily interesting journey. It is one of ever seeking to learn, to apply, and to share the fruits of your searching for knowledge and experience.

My message comes from my heart because of the appreciation and love I have for each one of you. My desire is that the counsel given will not only benefit you who graduate, but you who continue your education at this exceptional university.

To stand at this pulpit in the presence of such a concentration of devoted, righteous graduates, parents, and loved ones is to be profoundly moved with gratitude and appreciation. I am deeply touched as I contemplate what can occur in the coming years from what you graduates of BYU will do with the knowledge and experience gained at this unique university. You have the potential for making critically important contributions throughout the world. You can form eternal families, orient and raise righteous children, strengthen a host of professions, give caring service, and be a potent force for good in a world that desperately needs it. You can share the message of the Restoration by precept and example.

I warmly congratulate each one of you 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 strict 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. You have not only attained an outstanding secular education, but you have done it while meeting the highest standards of integrity and spirituality. I am truly humbled to be in your presence.

You have accomplished this at an exceptional university that has focused on academic excellence and building strong character in its student body. You are unique among graduating students in the world for having been schooled in a Latter-day Saint Church university. Therefore, we expect of you future accomplishments far beyond those asked of a graduating class elsewhere. Your presence here indicates you are a singular man or woman of great value and potential. We expect you to be righteous, effective leaders, to contribute strongly to society, and to build worthy eternal families. Your preparation here has provided an exceptional foundation for you to realize worthwhile ambitions and to accomplish much good.

You have been supported by noble parents and family and some by a loving spouse. You have been encouraged by a competent faculty where individual instructors have become impressive sources of professional knowledge as well as worthy role models. Often the devoted staff has eased the way through the bewildering challenges of a college education. All of this activity at Brigham Young University has been guided by an exceptionally devoted university president, Cecil Samuelson.

As your life unfolds you will encounter challenges that will test severely your strength and ability. You will find that the education you have received at this campus will provide the capacity to resolve some of those challenges. You will confirm that your education is a key to help you open the doors of opportunity. You will likewise prove that it is not, however, a guarantee for success. It must be coupled with hard work, consistency, and devotion to duty. If you are wise you will seek inspiration and guidance from a loving Heavenly Father. You will find some challenges that can only be resolved by prayerful communication with Him and by being sensitive to the resulting impressions that come through the Holy Ghost. Faithful obedience to those spiritual promptings will protect, guide, motivate, strengthen, and crown your efforts. You will find success, joy, and happiness for yourselves and great blessings for those whom you love and serve. For the Savior has said, "Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men." (D&C 18:18).

With your graduation you are given increased freedom to act. There is a lessening of controls, so that you may be able to make more basic decisions on your own. Some erroneously consider this a release from bondage, a removal of shackles, a breaking of restraints. In the excitement of new freedom, a few use unwisely their agency to select paths which lead them away from the solid moorings of the gospel and the faultless

direction of the Holy Spirit. Some are tempted to begin foolish experimentation along forbidden paths even on the day of graduation. May no one in this graduating class cast aside the spiritual heritage that has been acquired over years of diligent study and obedience. The freedom of choice, given in increased measure this day, provides greater opportunity for limitless personal growth and development, as well as for unbounded service to others. It also will yield happiness beyond the power of expression when exercised within the controlled environment of the gospel plan.

I have a few concrete suggestions for you who graduate today. They are simple yet profound. They are drawn from the doctrine of the Lord and personal experience that has brought happiness and success to my dear wife, Jeanene, and to me.

Use Correct Principles. Establish a set of guiding principles for your life from the teachings of Jesus Christ. Never compromise them. Difficulties in life begin when small deviations from true principles are made to justify a quick move to greater accomplishment. Over time, that pattern brings failure. Strength comes from making no exceptions to guiding principles. Without such a foundation an individual lives for the moment, making decisions according to popular trends or current circumstances. Such will likely violate eternal truths and lose by rationalization many of the marvelous opportunities of life that bring great achievement and happiness.

Exercise Faith. It is understandable that you feel some anxiety about your future. Because you are exceptional young men and women, the Lord will accelerate your growth by giving you experiences that could stretch your current capacity to the limit. Let your predominant attitude be faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ, confidence in His teachings, trust in His ability to keep His promises and reliance on His capacity to inspire, motivate, and guide you. Stay close to Him through faith and obedience. Then, through the Holy Ghost, He will help you find the solution to every perplexing problem you will face. The answers to major challenges will likely come after considerable prayer and pondering. Usually, portions of the answer will be given a piece at a time until the full answer is received.

Work and Pray. I share an insight for success from an individual from humble background who achieved exceptional spiritual and material attainment in this life. It is to him we owe gratitude for this facility in which we meet, namely J. Willard Marriott, Sr. He said: "Work and prayer are the two greatest words in the English language." Each of you will benefit by carefully applying that counsel in your life.

Be Disciplined. Discipline breeds determination. Determination fueled by discipline overcomes the barriers in life that would cause us to fall far short of our true potential. Determination when supported by practiced discipline converts barriers into ladders to greater success, happiness, joy, and accomplishment.

Rigorous discipline is at the core of all significant attainment. Strict discipline is at the root of significant character development. Discipline is self-strengthening. The more it is exercised the more capacity is available for its use. An individual that is truly disciplined does not flaunt it rather he or she employs it wisely, and is generously understanding of those who lack discipline.

I have learned much about quiet discipline from my precious wife Jeanene. It was the central hallmark of her character. While understanding and generous with others who did not employ it in their lives, she was strictly disciplined in her own.

Radiate a Positive Attitude. Let your attitude be that of continuing happiness. The challenges you face, the growth experiences you encounter, should be like temporary scenes played out on the stage of continuing peace and happiness. Don't become so absorbed in a single event that you can't think of anything else. Challenges are not intended to be the substance of life. It is by understanding and obeying the teachings of God that your life will fulfill its glorious purpose. That perspective keeps challenges confined to their proper place—stepping stones to further growth and attainment. Life should and can be wondrously beautiful.

Establish a Home and Family. Make one of the highest priorities of life the formation of an eternal family, then live to permit the Lord to guide you to that objective while accepting His timing. Some of you have begun to reach that sacred objective as wife and husband. Others are in the process of finding that special eternal companion. Some of you may have feelings that you will not have such a blessing. Do not cheat yourself that way. Live to be led to an eternal companion.

Your home should be a haven of peace free of conflict and dissention. It is there where the gospel is most effectively taught and lived. Make the place where you live, no matter how humble or temporary, a clean, righteous, peaceful environment where the Spirit can dwell. Keep the contaminating influence of unacceptable media, internet, magazines, and the like out of your home.

Trust in the Lord. Be obedient to His counsel. Follow His commandments, and you will be filled with inspiration and power. You will obtain goals beyond your personal capacity. Do not judge your potential by what you are today, but by what you can become under the guidance of the Lord. Those who disobey the commandments of God face the challenges of life alone without the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

One of the greatest early indicators of career success is deep, self-confidence in your ability to overcome challenges. That self-confidence comes from knowing that you do not walk alone. Your obedience will bring confidence. That confidence will bring appropriate power. You will learn that the Spirit can bless you in every walk of life.

Material things do not of themselves produce happiness and satisfaction and the joy of attainment on earth. They are not required for your exaltation. It is nobility of character that gives life its full meaning. Such character is the fabric of inner strength and conviction. It is woven from countless righteous decisions, none of which are difficult to make. A consistent righteous life produces an inner power and strength that can be permanently resistant to the eroding influence of sin and transgression.

Be honest and loyal. Keep your word and keep your commitments. If your responsibility is to provide an income for a family, acquire work with good leadership in a field that really matters. Give more than is expected. With your background from this university, minimum or average work is not acceptable. Admit mistakes when you make them, for we all do. That act builds character and also respect. Accept full responsibility for your actions.

Live so that you are trusted. Trust opens wide the gate to exceptional opportunity and success. Seek to be challenged in what you do. Don't look for a safe haven where you have no risk, for you will not grow or have real satisfaction. Do not divide your life into separate compartments that apply to profession, Church, and family with different standards for each compartment, as is done in the world. Live consistently one high standard of truth, integrity, and hard work. That pattern will bring you success in every important aspect of life.

Follow Proper Traditions. Some traditions fortify families others severely challenge them. Let the traditions you make part of your home bring blessings by making your first priority your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ and His teachings the foundation of your life. Where traditions and customs are in harmony with His teachings, cherish and follow them to preserve your culture and heritage. Where family or national traditions or customs conflict with the teachings of God throw them away.

Smile. Everyone has problems, but nobody wants to know about yours. Smile a lot. It's a beautiful way to let sunshine into your life and to spread it to the joy and benefit of others.

Don't complain. There will be times when life just isn't fair. Some others may make unjust decisions that affect you professionally or otherwise. Don't waste time complaining. Life is charged with opportunity when you seek the help of the Lord to find it. Look for the gold nuggets of opportunity around you, mine them, and use them.

Serve others. Immense happiness comes from serving others selflessly. Always have a Church assignment. Always. Don't request specific callings but ask to be used so that you are constantly connected to the reality of eternal truth. That effort will keep your life in balance.

Express gratitude. Show gratitude for the blessings of life: the miracle of sight, and the other senses, the love of family, the restoration of truth, the wonder of spiritual guidance, and especially the gifts that flow from the Atonement. Peace and happiness are the precious fruits of a righteous life. They are only possible because of the Atonement of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Today as you commence the balance of your life, recognize that the Lord has placed the divine influence of the Holy Ghost in your life that will lead you along the individual plan He would have you fulfill here on earth. Through much prayer and pondering seek to identify and carefully follow the influence of that Spirit. Such direction is most easily identified by humbly seeking the will of the Lord.

As an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ I invoke a blessing upon each one of you, conditioned on your obedience and faith, that the Lord will guide you through the Holy Ghost to make the correct choices in important decisions you now face.

I testify that with unimaginable suffering and agony at an incalculable price, the Savior earned His right to be our Intermediary, our Redeemer, and our Final Judge. Through faith in Him and our Holy Father receipt of the required ordinances and covenants you can earn your right to the blessings of eternal marriage made possible through His Infinite Atonement. You can qualify through continuing obedience for the glorious privilege of eternal life in the Celestial Kingdom with obedient loved ones. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.