

Convocation Remarks for April 25, 2014

Introduction:

Good morning.

For years I have sat, unadorned, where my colleagues now sit, giving thanks that I was not in the precarious position behind this podium. But alas, the time has arrived and I am not only happy, but anxious to spend the next 11 minutes with all of you --especially you graduates, who, as Bob Seger says, are now "charging from the gate."

But as a communicator, I am acutely aware of the three distinct audiences here this morning, I would like to address each --as we say in advertising parlance-- "target audience" separately.

First, you parents, who have at once worried about and celebrated the eventuality of this day.

Next, my faculty colleagues seated behind me, who, paradoxically, all belong far ahead of me.

And finally, you amazing students who have labored, sometimes to exhaustion, to be present today.

But first, may I suggest a metaphor to which each group can hopefully relate. Shakespeare suggested that the world is a stage. But for a few minutes this morning, I'd like to challenge that notion. Please close your eyes for a few seconds, and pull up your own image this music brings to mind:

(music of marching band)

Hopefully, all of you, regardless of point of view, saw a band marching in a parade of some kind. For me, I was taken back a number of years ago when we dropped off one of our sons at the US

Military Academy at West Point. (pic of West Point parade field) He was in cut-offs and sneakers in the morning and that very afternoon he was in a uniformed formation, marching smartly across what is called the "plain." (blank) You no doubt saw something different. And so this morning I would like to use a parade metaphor or analogy as we proceed.

In a few minutes you graduates will march to your own drum across this stage. You parents will justifiably revel for that few seconds of glory, and we faculty will experience some bittersweet pangs as we watch our tutored surrogates walk into the future.

So, first a few words to you admiring, supportive, parents, standing along the parade route.

(pic of parade route/people, :05, then to blank)

We love your young adult sons and daughters. Indeed, that's why we in academic regalia, have chosen to be at this unique university and are here today. We have tried our best to help your maturing children to be their best -in the discipline or career path of their choosing. And,

We also love the disciplines we are commissioned to teach them, and have genuinely enjoyed mentoring them, often on a one-to-one basis. Our lives have been blessed, and in some cases altered, by those you have entrusted to us. I believe we have taken seriously our charge to practically and academically prepare and inspire them to meet the sometimes smooth, sometimes rocky parade route ahead.

Here are some behind-the-scene scenes in support of what I have just said about your students:

(pics of awards)

For example, here are four separate awards cabinets adorning the walls of the Brimhall Communications Building, where some of your students have labored:

Advertising awards . . . (pic) public relations awards . . . (pic)
journalism awards . . . and (pic) broadcasting awards . . . (say more)

(Pat's 2 pics of the Ad Lab)

And here are a few of your senior sons and daughters mentoring their younger cohorts in our Advertising Lab, as they prepare their creative portfolios for review. As faculty, we neither petitioned nor coerced them into doing this. If advertising can be said to have a more be Christian side, you're looking at it.

(blank)

Lastly, thank you parents for sending to those of us in Advertising your fidgety, ADD-prone children, for in the days and weeks hence they may well be working on the Snickers® account in the morning, and selling Subaru's in the afternoon.

Now, a brief word to my faculty colleagues:

May I take the liberty of speaking on your behalf regarding these anxious, mortar-boarded souls behind you?

To speak the obvious, these students did not get here alone.

(Four (4) professor/ student pics in sequence)

Sure as I stand here, I know that each of you had a self-sacrificing hand in bringing them to this point. If tradition holds, in a few minutes you will all stand while this audience applauds your work and service on their behalf.

(Blank)

This is a special institution. But the buildings and the other physical resources do not make it so. And though BYU has a lofty and meaningful mission statement, that in itself does not make this place special. To use an anatomic analogy, as did the Apostle Paul, this university is a body, and you, the faculty, are its heart -and therefore its heartbeat. I thank you. I salute you.

And now may I address you parade marchers --those who are the reason we gather here today --you who have for the past four or more years been symbolically practicing and polishing your instruments, (Pic of parade float) or creating marvelous floats in anticipation of your life's parade.

(blank)

You of course know this, but universities are very organized places, and BYU is no exception. There is structure; there is order; and there is at least the perception of calm in an increasingly frenzied world.

As a digital immigrant striving to adjust to a pre-existing culture of ones and zeros, I like to think of the outside world as (pic of fighter jet) speeding along somewhere beyond Mach 3, or just over 2,300 miles per hour at sea level.

(pic of something indicating digital speed, or Wall Street sign)

You students may not think of speed in that way; you may think of speed in terms of bandwidth or gigabytes per second.

(Blank)

The speed necessary, for example, for some Wall Street magnates to make substantial stock trades in just thousandths of a second.

But isn't time an interesting dimension? We mortals like to measure time so we can do things like plan future events, determine winners in a race, measure progress toward goals, or perhaps determine how much we should charge clients for our work.

But let me guess, by now you students are asking yourselves: What has all of this speed and time talk to do with the parade? Allow me connect the dots.

(pic of parade stand)

Soon, it will be your time to pass in front of the review stand, that spot in the parade route where you are judged by life's onlooking luminaries and dignitaries. Whatever else has happened along the parade route, you want to be in perfect sync with others in your group, or performing at your highest level as you pass by.

(Blank)

So now, while you are yet in the parade staging area putting the finishing touches on your wide spectrum of performances, and before marching off campus and into your future, may I offer a few words of encouragement, or "life tips."

1. Determine now what you want from your career; otherwise your career will exact from you what it wants from you. Let me illustrate with a brief story. After cutting my ad teeth at General Electric, I got my first "big time" position in what was then New England's largest ad agency, Wilson, Haight & Welch. I was certain I had arrived, as I was assigned as a copywriter on the Spalding Golf and Spalding Team Sports accounts. A dream come true. But as I soon discovered, all was not well in ad land. People were being used up --literally giving it all --sometimes even their families-- to a career that in the end left them as empty vessels. As I peered into the eyes of one such associate, I determined then that the business would not consume me --or my family. Thankfully, my value set won out. Which is a nice segue to tip number 2.

2. Be sure that your values drive your career, and not the other way around. That's the only life-course I know to assure that your career indeed serves you and your family.

3. Find a way to stay involved in your career choice, even if you find yourself a stay-at-home mom -or dad. Freelance and part-time work could serve you well during the heavy parenting years that may lie ahead.

4. As you age, as we all must, waste no time looking for the fountain of youth. As Nephi reminds us, "...do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy..." 2 Nephi 9:52) A better career strategy may be to embrace the fountain of tech, for it will undoubtedly continue to affect us all.

(pic of Yoda)

5. Believe in yourself -and as Yoda has said, "trust your feelings."
(blank)

Said another way, trust in your internal, Light-of-Christ compass -- the one based in faith.

6. This one takes courage, and I say it with tongue partially in cheek-- if you are not happy in your career, find a really nice, legal way to get yourself fired. That will force you to find a new and improved position. Your passage through mortality is way too brief to labor unfulfilled. Plus, your spouse will love you even more if you come home happy each day.

(blank)

And lastly, before you leave BYU, please remember these two assuring and divine injunctions for the hard times, when despite your best efforts, your individual parade comes to a rest:

(pic of Savior)

First, when you are living the gospel as best you can, your promised companion, the Holy Ghost, will guide your thoughts and therefore your feelings and ultimately your actions.

(blank)

As it says in 2 Nephi 31:5: "the Holy Ghost will show unto you all things what ye should do."

From Nephi we also learn this most profound and encouraging counsel found in 2 Nephi 31:3: (word slide) “. . . feast on the words of Christ, for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”

(blank)

Remember, students, that we in this university love you, believe in you, and cherish our relationships with you. Thank you.