

Tapestry of Life

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On a clear day we can see forever and ever. We know where we came from and why we are here on earth and where we ultimately are going. The threads woven into the fabric of our lives are beginning to create a beautiful tapestry. Golden threads of eternal truths are interwoven throughout the fabric. The gospel of Jesus Christ has given us a pattern to follow, a pattern that has been provided for the benefit and growth of all God's children. "Come, follow me" is the declaration of the Master Weaver—our Savior Jesus Christ (Luke 18:22). If we continue to follow the intricate design of His pattern, we will add depth, meaning, and splendor to the fabric of our lives. Each of us, though, must be the weavers of our own tapestry. We must pull the yarn, tie the knots, and cut the strands—row by row—until our life here on earth is finished.

In laying the foundation of earth life, a blueprint was used. God drew up the plans and wrote the specifications. Then our Father called us all together, and the plans were perfected for forming an earth. In His own words, He said:

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them. [Abraham 3:24–25]

That large assembly included all of us. We agreed to come to the earth, each in our turn, to see if we would do all things that had been commanded.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever" (Ecclesiastes 1:4). There is "a time to be born, and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Our birth and time on earth were foreordained in the eternities. We were all privileged to be born in this the last dispensation of the fulness of times. We must never forget that! There is a time and a season and a purpose for each of us and also for each phase of our lives. Each stage adds insight, depth, and color.

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little . . . ; for unto him that receiveth I will give more. [2 Nephi 28:30]

Marilyn S. Bateman, wife of BYU president Merrill J. Bateman, gave this -devotional address on 19 September 2000.

This whole mortal life is a time for us to prepare to meet our God.

I would like to suggest a few of the major stages of life and what the purpose is for each period. The time line I am going to present is adapted from some suggestions of a wonderful and talented woman by the name of Dr. Virginia Cutler. In the late 1960s she was the dean of the College of Family Living at Brigham Young University. She was a legend in her day—and a very dear friend.

The Green Years or Preparatory Years

The green years are the first phase of life. They range from birth until about 20 to 25 years of age. These are the preparatory years. We all start out as “greenies.” During these years tremendous growth takes place. It is during this time that children prepare to become adults. We learn to talk, we learn to walk, and we learn to trust and love. We learn to share and to care about others. We learn all the values that create our character and our way of life.

During the green years parents are the most powerful influence—for good or bad—on their children. In our church we feel so strongly about parental influence that we have a family proclamation that states what our standard is:

*Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens. . . . Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations. [“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 102]*

Small children are mimickers of what they see and hear. I remember visiting with a daughter and her family who at the time lived in another state. Their youngest little girl did

absolutely everything and said everything that her older sister did or said. This bothered the older sister, yet she herself was a carbon copy of her mother. It was wonderful because I could even see a little of myself as the drama played out, as I am the mother and role model that their mother had.

Often if a mother is a talented cook, her daughter will be also. If a mother is a wonderful violinist, it is pretty sure that her children will play a musical instrument. If a father is a sports fanatic, his children, particularly his sons, will likely be so as well. It cannot be overstated how important parents are in the lives of their children. President Brigham Young said, “It is the mother’s influence that is most effective in moulding the mind of the child for good or for evil. If she treat[s] lightly the things of God; it is more than likely her children will be inclined to do the same” (*JD* 18:263).

It is often from parents and other family members that seeds of gospel principles are planted in the fertile minds of young children. The Apostle Paul declared to Timothy: “The unfeigned faith that is in thee . . . dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice” (2 Timothy 1:5). With flowering testimonies we seek to prepare for missions and for temple marriages. It is in the green years that these desires are kindled. Most of you, my young friends, are still in the process of carrying out that aspect of your life.

It is in the early green years that children are exposed to school and begin their formal education. During this time they develop their attitudes about education. What happens during these years will have an impact on what they do for the rest of their lives regarding their education and eventual profession. My dear young friends, you are in the final stages of the green years. Your education here at BYU is preparing you for the rest of your life. Now is the time—the season of your life—to take advantage of every learning opportunity that you can. President Hinckley counseled:

Get all the education you can. . . . I do not care what you want to be as long as it is honorable. A car mechanic, a brick layer, a plumber, an electrician, a doctor, a lawyer. . . . But whatever you are, take the opportunity to train for it and make the best of that opportunity. . . . Now is the great day of preparation for each of you. [TGBH, 172]

Gaining a formal education is your main priority right now, and you are truly blessed to have the resources of this great university available to you. Use these resources wisely and partake of the feast of knowledge set before you. One advantage you have at BYU is the chance to study the gospel and develop your spirituality. What a remarkable gift it is to read the scriptures daily and to share your testimony of the gospel with others your age. This spiritual focus will be a blessing to you throughout your life.

During this time of preparation, I challenge you to start looking beyond yourself. Get out of the “me.” Learn to give service to others, to share freely the talents and skills you are developing. Give service to your family, to the Church, and to the community. College years are a busy time. But you will always be busy. There will never be a convenient time to serve others. Make a commitment to give of yourselves in service now, and it will become a lifelong habit.

Prepare yourselves to create an orderly home environment. Many young men and women have not learned homemaking skills from their parents. Universities are dropping classes from homemaking areas. People today have an attitude that homemaking is not important. We must not buy that attitude. The home is the center of our physical and spiritual lives. Both young men and young women should recognize their role in maintaining a house of order and comfort. Don’t cheat yourselves of the sweet pleasures that come from having a clean, well-ordered home. It is a gesture of love and respect to your spouse and children when you can budget your money wisely, prepare delicious and

nourishing meals, and create an environment that is beautiful and serene. Make it a priority now to learn those domestic skills that will add to the peace and comfort of your family.

Incredible growth takes place during these preparatory years. The beautiful green background we weave into our tapestry at this time establishes a framework for the rest of our lives. You will add different hues and colors to your tapestry as you move through the later stages of your life, but your diligence, faithfulness, and deliberate action now will determine the level of joy and peace of mind you will experience as you take on a wider range of responsibilities.

Multicolored Years or Accumulative Years

Many of you are passing out of the green years and are moving into what have been called the multicolored years. These “accumulative years,” between the ages of 25 and 40, are very busy years. You will be getting married and acquiring a spouse, entering your profession, having children, and buying a home. You will accumulate many things that will add to the fullness of your lives. These years are full of activity and growth, and your success during this time will depend on how well you have prepared yourselves during the green years.

Red Years or Launching Years

The Red Years, between the ages of 40 and 60, are the launching years. They are a time to exercise restraint and caution. Most likely you will have heavy financial and social demands but not the level of physical vitality you have been used to. Be careful not to overdo it; plan ahead for this time.

Children will be leaving home, going on missions, attending college, and getting married. We can experience some strain and loneliness in our marriages if we are not prepared for the time when our children leave home. It is important to make the relationship with your spouse your number-one priority.

Most of you have parents who are going through this time of life. Be sensitive to the sacrifices they are making. Show gratitude for the opportunities they have provided you and be of service when you can.

Golden Years

The golden years, between the ages of 60 and 80, are a winding-down time. Some will have more financial resources available and more time on their hands to do the things they have always wanted to do. The golden years provide time for playing with grandchildren, travel, missions, temple work, and genealogy.

Metallic Years

The metallic years, if we live this long, are the years when we have silver in our hair, gold

in our teeth, and lead in our feet. Eventually we will all die. But even death will be welcome if we are prepared to meet our Savior, if we have fulfilled our life's work according to the Lord's will.

If we make Christ the center of our lives, our tapestries will be rich in color and beautiful in design. I hope that as you continue to work on your life's tapestry you will be able to see the big picture. I hope you will see that what you weave now will influence the texture and pattern of the rest of your life. It is a glorious life. Trials will come, but you will be prepared to deal with them if you take the time now to pattern your life's tapestry after Christ's. I pray you will, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.