

“Doubt Not, Fear Not”

THOMAS S. MONSON

Spring has come to the valleys of our beautiful state of Utah. Lawns are turning a verdant green; the azure blue sky, punctuated with billowy white clouds, signals that the long days of winter are past; and a new season blossoms forth in beauty.

As you have contemplated this season, you may have heaved a mighty sigh of relief and exclaimed, “Commencement day is near! I made it!”

Suddenly a more pensive mood prevails, and you realize you are closing an important chapter of your life. Friendly faces and happy smiles are everywhere to be found, but you are leaving behind classrooms of learning, teachers who truly care, and friends you may never again see. Even the most stoic person is likely to shed a tear.

Graduates, I rejoice in the privilege to be with you. You walk in the sacred footsteps of those who have gone before, showing others the way to follow. Today you will lay aside the cap and gown—the traditional symbols of academic accomplishment—and will look backward with pride on your achievements and look forward with hope to the future. In the

future you will enter the classrooms of learning as teachers, the halls of justice as attorneys, the corridors of hospitals as technicians and nurses, and the plants of industry as leaders in business. I trust that you will not forget the lessons you have learned at Brigham Young University.

My compliments to your outstanding president—Merrill J. Bateman—the administration, and the faculty. They have planted the seeds of learning and curiosity in your fertile minds. Now it is your turn. Nurture those seeds well as you acknowledge the real meaning of commencement as you, here and now, with diploma in hand, commence the next stage of your lives.

Do not settle for less than you can achieve. In a familiar verse, the poetess Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote:

Thomas S. Monson was president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this commencement address was given on 24 April 2003.

*One ship drives east and another drives west
With the self-same winds that blow;
'Tis the set of the sails
And not the gales
That tells them the way to go.*

*Like the winds of the sea are the winds of fate
As we voyage along through life;
'Tis the set of the soul
That decides its goal
And not the calm or the strife.*
[“The Winds of Fate,” *World Voices* (New York: Hearst’s International Library Company, 1916), 51]

One who had a clear goal in mind and who pursued it stubbornly was a high school senior who wrote the following letter to a college he wanted to attend—after he had received from them a letter of rejection:

Dear Admissions Officer:

I am in receipt of your rejection of my application. As much as I would like to accommodate you, I find I cannot accept it. I have already received four rejections from other colleges, and this number is, in fact, over my limit. Therefore, I must reject your rejection—and will appear for classes on September first.

I don’t know the outcome of that student’s letter, but there are many examples in life of those who rise from failure to success.

In 1902 the poetry editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* returned a sheaf of poems to a 28-year-old poet with this curt note: “Our magazine has no room for your vigorous verse.” The poet was Robert Frost, who rejected the rejection.

In 1905 the University of Bern turned down a PhD dissertation as being irrelevant and fanciful. The young physics student who wrote the dissertation was Albert Einstein, who rejected the rejection.

In 1894 the rhetoric teacher at Harrow in England wrote on a 16-year-old’s report card, “A conspicuous lack of success.” The 16-year-old was Winston Churchill, who rejected the rejection.

If you ever have doubts—and of course you will—just remember this quotation from Shakespeare’s play *Measure for Measure*: “Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt” (act 1, scene 4, line 78).

At this time, as you prepare to embark upon the future, I suggest a simple three-word formula: “Think to Thank.” It provides the finest capsule course for a happy marriage, the formula for enduring friendships, and a pattern for personal happiness. One of the problems of this troubled world in which we live is that people think more of getting than of giving, more of receiving, not even stopping to express thanks for that which is received.

We owe an eternal debt of gratitude to all of those—past and present—who have given so much of themselves that we might have so much for ourselves. Take things with gratitude rather than for granted.

As we view the disillusionment that today engulfs countless thousands, we are learning the hard way what an ancient prophet wrote out for us: “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase” (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

It is an immutable law that the more you give away, the more you receive. It has been said that you make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give.

Graduates, you not only enter your new world, you help to shape it. John Ruskin provided sound counsel when he said:

Therefore, when we build, let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those

*stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labour and wrought substance of them, "See! this our fathers did for us." ["The Lamp of Memory," in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), section 10]*

There may be moments of darkness and discouragement. During those periods of crisis, it would be well to remember the counsel from Minnie Louise Haskins, who wrote:

*I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way." ["God Knows," *The Desert* (1908)]*

May your goals be clear, may you reach out to others with kindness and generosity, and may faith guide your life, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.