

Fixed Constants in Your Lives and Careers

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I am honored to stand before you as graduates of this great university. You have joined groups of men and women who, through their efforts at this school, prepared themselves to make a difference and who have gone on to make great contributions to our individual communities, our nations, and to the world. I have a friend who was an Army Blackhawk Helicopter pilot when he was younger. His son has now joined the Army and is in training to become an Army Blackhawk Helo pilot. My friend talks to his son often as he goes through his rigorous training. He listens intently to his son's experiences and it brings back memories of his training some thirty years or so ago.

Many of the issues and problems his son is going through are the same my friend experienced. My friend said that his experience from thirty years ago has been of great benefit to his son, because his experience has enabled his son to learn faster and not have to waste as much time in trial and error. A couple weeks ago, my friend's son told him that he was having problems hovering. He said that when he was attempting to hover with the Blackhawk he was unable to keep the craft steady. The helo had a tendency to pitch and roll. My friend asked him what he was focusing on. He told him in his experience, a possible cause of the problem is that he might be focusing on things too close to the helo. He suggested to focus on something further away, to pick a point in the distance. Well, a couple weeks later the son called and reported that his dad's suggestion had worked. He was focusing on something too close to the helo. This caused him to overcorrect and make drastic corrections. The son learned a valuable lesson. As he focused on something in the distance, he could keep the craft steady.

There is a principle in this that we all need to understand. If we keep our eyes on a fixed constant in the distance, it will keep us from having to overcorrect and from being tossed to and fro at every crisis or supposed crisis that comes our way.

Staying true to your beliefs is paramount to your success, whether it be in business, government, or at home.

I want to give you from my experience three constants that might assist you in not having to go through as much trial and error and will serve as fixed constants in your lives and careers as you go forward.

The first constant is "Integrity": You have received a moral education. I am confident that you have been taught the difference between right and wrong. It appears to me that one of the things that have continually changed over the years is our idea of what integrity is. We have become a much-nuanced society. We debate the meaning of "is." We have gone away from the old adage of "Say what you mean and mean what you say." It appears each generation gets a little worse than the last. Years ago, for the most part, probably more in my father's time, we didn't need air-tight contracts, our handshake was our bond and good enough.

From the 43rd and the 44th chapters of Alma in the Book of Mormon, I will relate a fascinating story. If you remember, the Nephites had been forced to go to battle against the Lamanites to fight for their liberty and freedom from bondage. The Lamanite force was twice as large as the Nephites. Through prayer and the great leadership of Captain Moroni, his army as well as Lehi's army miraculously surrounded the larger Lamanite forces and now had the ability to completely wipe the Lamanite army. Moroni, having compassion, sent for the Lamanite leader Zerahemnah. Moroni commanded Zerahemnah to deliver up his weapons and promise never to

come to war against his people again. If he would do this, Moroni's armies would spare their lives. Let me read the 8th verse in Chapter 44:

And now it came to pass that when Zerahemnah had heard these sayings he came forth and delivered up his sword and his cimeter, and his bow into the hands of Moroni, and said unto him: Behold, here are our weapons of war; we will deliver them up unto you, but we will not suffer ourselves to take an oath unto you, which we know that we shall break, and also our children; but take our weapons of war, and suffer that we may depart into the wilderness; otherwise we will retain our swords, and we will perish or conquer.

I have always been fascinated that Zerahemnah, who was obviously a wicked and bloodthirsty leader of the Lamanites, was not willing to take an oath that he knew he couldn't or wouldn't keep. Even to save his own and his men's lives. Can you imagine something like that happening today?

Now many in the world seem to allow themselves the luxury of saying *anything* that would get them out of trouble for the moment. Graduates: You have something that will separate you from your competition and that is *integrity*. You say what you mean and you mean what you say. You have the integrity to live the values that you have been taught.

I want to illustrate this constant to you through a couple of personal experiences.

I served my mission in Japan and gained a great love for Japan and its people. I returned to BYU and received a degree in Asian studies, with a minor in Japanese along with a concurrent degree in geography. As you can see, I was trying to cover all my bases. Anyway, after becoming a special agent for the Naval Investigative Service (NIS), which is now known as the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), I was transferred to Yokosuka, Japan, due to my language ability. Much of my time was spent dealing with the Japanese police. Well, if you think our government has a monster of a bureaucracy, wait until you see Japan's—especially in the Japanese Police Department.

One day after being completely frustrated with the Japanese police, I found myself venting my frustration by hitting the wall of my office. My door was open and all of a sudden I realized that outside my office door a crowd of agents had gathered. After I noticed, I stopped venting and turned around and said "What?" They told me "We have never heard you swear before, but we know you are mad enough to swear, so we are just waiting for you to do it now." You have to put this in context. In the military and in law enforcement, swearing seems to be a very common thing. Maybe this is why everyone was so surprised to have me around—a man who did not swear or take the Lord's name in vain.

Yes, people know who we are and are watching.

A few years later, I was about to testify in the trial of a person I had arrested for committing an aggravated assault. Just prior to the trial, the prosecuting attorney stopped me and asked, "Richard, you are a Mormon aren't you?" I indicated that I was, then he said, "I have never heard you swear, but I need to ask you. Do you swear?" I told him no. He then said that this might come up as an issue in trial and asked me if I minded him bringing up my religion. I told him I didn't mind, and he thanked me. Well, later on in the trial when I took the stand, the prosecuting attorney asked me if I was a Mormon. He asked me if the reason I didn't swear is because of my religion. I said yes. He then asked me if I ever swore, and I indicated that not since I was an adult. That line of questioning stopped, and we proceeded to testify concerning the confession I had taken from the suspect. I found out after the trial that the defense attorney had planned on bringing up that I had coerced the suspect into a confession by swearing at him, etc.

It was funny. The defense attorney never brought it up. He realized that his client had lied to him. His client did not have integrity.

So you see, your example does mean something. As you go into the world, your integrity will be tested every day, even in the small things. Make your word your bond. If you remember who you are and always keep your integrity, you will find that in the long run you will prosper.

The second constant is “Service”: A popular hymn says “The World has need of willing men,” a willingness to serve. There is a need for service. It is not about having power, fame, or riches, or a combination of those. I believe it is about service. Whether we work for private industry or the government, we should be dedicated to service which allows you and me to make a difference in our sphere of influence. I have been a Federal agent for over twenty-three years now, so I would be remiss if I didn’t take this opportunity to make a small plug for government service. I am sure many of you can and will make a lot more money in private business, but there is a great benefit in serving your country. Private business as well as our government more than ever needs individuals who stand for the ideals that our Founding Fathers envisioned. In our small way, we can all make a difference and help to continue to make this country great. The BYU motto “enter to learn go forth to serve” has never been as important as it is today.

As we walk through these doors into our chosen careers, hoping to fulfill our dreams and aspirations, let us ask ourselves the question: “Have I done any good in the world today?” Our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable.

Service will make us strong. Service gives us purpose and courage in life. It brings us closer to God and helps us to refine our divine nature. It teaches us to love and understand our fellowmen, and it helps us forget about our personal desires—helping us to eliminate selfishness, pride, and ingratitude. All these qualities assist us in being the very best we possibly can be in our chosen fields of endeavor and, when tried, will make you and I a cut above. Kindness, patience, and understanding will increase as we serve things greater than ourselves, while intolerance, jealousy, envy, greed, and selfishness will decrease. As we serve, we will seek to please God first which will keep our focus on the important things in life and which will keep us from having to over correct and waffle in the face of difficulty. If we serve, we will strive to build and lift our fellowmen, we will find the good in others, and we will not find reason or have time to become offended. As we serve, we will accept our assignments with humility, recognizing our limitations but convinced that with God all things are possible.

King Benjamin declared, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). When we serve with devotion, even when things don’t turn out the way we would like, we will not be as easily discouraged, fatigued, or frustrated.

I submit to you, these are the types of employees the world of government and business are asking for and pleading for.

Lastly, the third constant is “Sacrifice”: Be willing to Sacrifice. We have become the “me, me” generation. We tend to look at things at how it benefits us personally, not necessarily how it benefits those around us. Unfortunately, many in society think they are “entitled”—not necessarily for what they have done or accomplished but just because they *are*. As you go out in the work force and interview for those jobs and work in your areas of interest, this idea of “entitlement” can be a killer in the workplace.

In my position, I see this a lot. Many with great academic credentials come to work and expect the same treatment and pay as their co-workers who have had many dedicated years of experience along with the equivalent academic credentials. They argue to be paid for what they think they are worth not necessarily what their current true value is. This sense of entitlement

does not help them as an individual to stay humble, learn, and progress at as fast a pace as they should. We shouldn't expect money, title, and authority to be handed to us because of our academics, we will have to prove ourselves through sacrifice that we are worthy of the rewards that will come. Let me assure you that if you are willing to sacrifice for the greater good and earn what you get, that in the long run you will be further ahead than those not willing to sacrifice for anything except themselves.

I have a son who had the honor and privilege to play football for BYU under Coach Mendenhall. I admire Coach Mendenhall and have marveled at his leadership abilities. I believe much of his leadership is centered on sacrifice. He emphasizes to sacrifice personal wants and desires for the team. I have heard him say something to the effect that we should work harder to be worth more than you earn.

Graduates, as you walk out these doors today, I ask you to remember the values and principles we have discussed: integrity, service, and sacrifice. Those constants along with everything else that you have learned at this great institution will enable you to stay steady and focused. You will have your sights set on tried and true fixed principles. With this in mind, you will overcome the varied challenges that will surely come your way.

To conclude, I offer my congratulations on a job well done. Good luck in all your future endeavors as you go forth to serve. Thank you and congratulations.