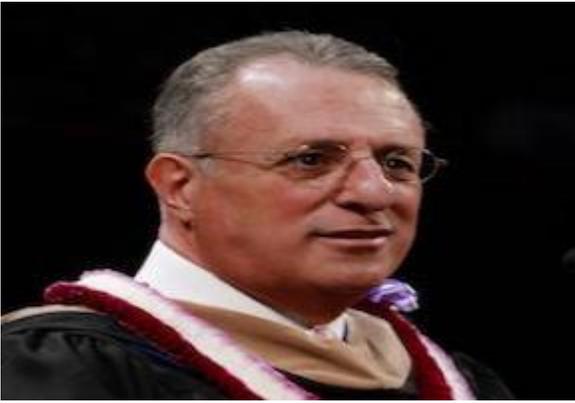


## Paths for Happiness



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Presidency of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Commencement  
June 08, 2017

My dear brothers, sisters, graduates, and friends, I am honored to be with you. I express my deep feelings of respect and admiration to all who are graduating today and to your wonderful families who have supported you in this important journey.

We are profoundly grateful for your righteous and exemplary lives. For the past several years, you have devoted many days, and surely endless hours, studying and preparing, both academically and spiritually, to enter a world that badly needs you.

You have qualified yourselves, through your work and your faith, to be recognized by this wonderful university and by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which sponsors and supports this university.

We happily salute you for all you have achieved and, even more important, for whom you are becoming through your experience these past years. We thankfully recognize the marvelous support of dedicated faculty members and staff, friends, and especially your families who have contributed to your great achievement. Congratulations to all of you.

I truly feel honored and privileged to have been assigned by the First Presidency to participate in these commencement exercises. I bring you their love, respect, and admiration for the wonderful work you completed to graduate. They are very mindful of each one of you.

I am impressed by what I have learned about this great university and its mission. It is extraordinary that the mission of BYU–Hawaii is “to integrate both spiritual and secular learning, and to prepare students with character and integrity who can provide leadership in their families, their communities, their chosen fields, and in building the kingdom of God.”

This is a wonderful mission statement. In the end, it relates to our Heavenly Father's purpose, ". . .this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."1

The Gospel Topics states, "Heavenly Father desires that we find true, lasting happiness. Our happiness is the design of all the blessings He gives us—gospel teachings, commandments, priesthood ordinances, family relationships, prophets, temples, the beauties of creation, and even the opportunity to experience adversity. His plan for our salvation is often called 'the great plan of happiness.'2 He sent His Beloved Son to carry out the Atonement so we can be happy in this life and receive a fulness of joy in the eternities."3

As you take your next step in life's great adventure after this graduation ceremony, I invite you to consider ways to find the paths of true happiness in life.

When we look around the world, it is very obvious that people everywhere are looking for something. In their own way, what they are really looking for is happiness. However, like the gospel itself, these people ". . .are only kept from [happiness] because they know not where to find it."4

Because they do not know where to find true and lasting happiness, they try to find it in things that will actually bring temporary pleasure only—such as buying things, seeking honor and praise from the world through inappropriate behavior, and ultimately focusing on physical beauty and attractiveness. Pleasure is often confused with happiness, but it is by no means synonymous with it. It seems that the more people seek this kind of temporary pleasure, they actually become less and less happy.

Pleasure, unlike happiness, is that which pleases us or gives us gratification. Usually, it endures for only a short time. As President McKay once said, "You may get that transitory pleasure, yes, but you cannot find joy, you cannot find happiness. Happiness is found only along that well-beaten track, narrow as it is, though straight, which leads to life eternal."5

Studies show that people are experiencing less happiness in life in the USA.6 Unfortunately for many, happiness is an elusive state. Scientists know happiness is "more than simply positive mood, happiness is a state of well-being that encompasses living a good life—that is, with a sense of meaning and deep satisfaction."7

Recent research shows that happiness is not the result of bouncing from one experience to the next. Instead, achieving happiness typically involves a long-sustained effort for something more important in life. Happiness is determined by habits, behaviors, and thought patterns that we can directly address with intentional action. Other studies suggest that the most important determining factor in achieving true happiness is actually "under personal control."8

Considering the fact that you are now departing for a new adventure in your life's journey, I think it would be worthwhile and beneficial to consider the importance of some of the paths for happiness as taught in the scriptures, and by modern prophets and Apostles. My intent is to bring these paths into our minds and hearts so we can make sure our footsteps are faithfully and firmly rooted in them. Doing so will allow us to truly enjoy happiness in the journey that is ahead.

The first of these paths is the path of virtue. Why is virtue so important in the path of happiness? Virtue is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards; it encompasses chastity and moral purity that prequalifies you to enter the Lord's holy temples. Virtuous people possess a quiet dignity and inner strength. They are confident because they are worthy to receive and be guided by the Holy Ghost. Virtue begins in the heart and in the mind, and it is the accumulation of thousands of small decisions and actions each day.

In Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46 we read: “. . .let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.”<sup>9</sup>

President Monson once taught that “there is no friendship more valuable than our own clear conscience, our own moral cleanliness—and what a glorious feeling it is to know that we stand in our appointed place, clean and with the confidence that we are worthy to do so.”<sup>10</sup>

A second path for happiness is uprightness. Elder Richard G. Scott once taught: “Recognize that enduring happiness comes from what you are, not from what you have. Real [happiness] comes from righteous character, and that is built from a pattern of consistent righteous decisions. When the things that you acquire are used as tools to help others, they won’t rule your life. Your righteous decisions determine who you are and what is important to you. They make doing the right things easier. For happiness now and throughout your life, steadfastly obey the Lord, no matter what pressure you feel to do otherwise.”<sup>11</sup>

As we study the scriptures, we learn that the promises made by the Lord to us encourage righteous living. Those promises must nourish our soul, bringing us hope by encouraging us not to give up even in the face of our daily challenges of living in a world whose ethical and moral values are becoming extinct, thus motivating people to sow in the flesh. Therefore, we need to make sure that our thoughts, words, and actions are elevating us to the level of the divinity of our heavenly parents.

A third path for happiness is faithfulness. It is fundamental to understand that God blesses us according to our faith. Faith is the source of living with divine purpose and eternal perspective. Faith is a practical principle that inspires diligence. It is a vital, living force manifest in our positive attitude and desire to willingly do everything that God and Jesus Christ ask of us. It’s what takes us to our knees to implore the Lord for guidance and encourages us to arise and act with confidence to achieve things consistent with His will.

Dear friends, as you go forward in your journey, you will go through a period of testing where you will be tested to see if you will do all things that the Lord your God shall command you. This is part of the mortal life experience. This will require unwavering faith in Christ—even in times of great difficulty. It will require that you press forward with steadfast faith in Christ, being led by the Spirit and trusting that God will provide for your needs. Please remember that you will need to be steadfast and that you must not waver in your faith. As you do so, the Lord will increase your capacity to rise above the challenges of life. You will be enabled to subdue negative impulses, and you will develop the capacity to overcome even what appear to be overwhelming obstacles.

A fourth path for happiness is holiness. Holiness is related to spiritual and moral perfection. Holiness indicates purity of a person’s heart and intent. The question is how can we labor each day to feed ourselves spiritually to the point that we can develop such godly character?

President Harold B. Lee, one of the prophets of this dispensation, answered this question. He said: “We develop our spiritual selves by practice. . . . We must have daily exercise by our spirits by prayer, by doing daily good deeds, by sharing with others. We must feed our spirits daily by studying the scriptures every day, by [family home evening], by attendance at meetings, by the partaking of the sacrament. . . . The righteous man strives for self-improvement knowing that he has daily need of repentance for his misdeeds or his neglect. . . . He endeavors to make each day his masterpiece so that at night’s close he can witness in his soul and to his God that whatever has come to his hand that day, he has done to the best of his ability.”<sup>12</sup>

Another important element of holiness is related to making and keeping covenants in the Temple. If we are faithful, these covenants can elevate us beyond the limits of our own power and perspective. All the promised blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ can be ours through our faithfulness to the ordinances and covenants we make before God and Jesus Christ in the temple. The people of Nephi “lived after the manner of happiness.” Part of their pattern of living included building a temple in which to worship and make covenants with the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

The key point of this path is that we should be very careful to develop spirituality and be morally pure. We read in Doctrine and Covenants 20:69: “And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures—walking in holiness before the Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, a fifth path for happiness involves keeping all the commandments of God and is related to all the other paths I enumerated before.

After the Nephites were separated from the Lamanites, they prospered exceedingly for they did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses. This pattern was an important element of living after the manner of happiness.<sup>15</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson once taught: “When we keep the commandments, our lives will be happier, more fulfilling, and less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear, and we will receive [God’s] promised blessings. The knowledge which we seek, the answers for which we yearn, and the strength which we desire today to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when we willingly obey the Lord’s commandments.”<sup>16</sup>

Listen to the Savior’s own words as He entreats us: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”<sup>17</sup>

My dear friends, may I suggest a further requisite in the continuing quest to finding the path of happiness? The golden pathway to happiness is one of selflessness and of giving love—the kind of love that has concern, interest, and some measure of charity for every living soul. Love is the direct route to the happiness that will enrich and bless our lives and the lives of others. It means that you show love even to your enemies, “. . . bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you . . .”<sup>18</sup>

In so doing, you will be fulfilling the greater commandment to love God Himself and to enjoy His love. You will soar above the ill winds that blow, above the sordid, the self-defeating, and the bitter. You have the promise that “. . . your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.”<sup>19</sup> True and lasting happiness comes only when we choose to “. . . love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”<sup>20</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, may each one of us choose to love the Lord as we follow His paths for happiness that is the object and design of our existence.

I express my personal congratulations and best wishes to each and every one of you on this special day. I leave my testimony and this message with you. Go forth, be happy, and do all things that would be pleasing unto your Father in Heaven.

I say these things in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

[1] Moses 1:39

[2] Alma 42:8

[3] lds.org, Gospel Topics Essays, Happiness overview

[4] Doctrine and Covenants 123:12

[5] In Conference Report, October 1919, 180

[6] United Nations, “World Happiness Report” 2017; see <http://worldhappiness.report/>

[7] Psychology Today, see <https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/happiness>

[8] Psychology Today, see <https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/happiness>

[9] Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46

[10] “Examples of Righteousness,” April 2008 General Conference

[11] “Making the Right Decisions,” April 1991 General Conference

[12] Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee, [2000], 175-84

[13] 2 Nephi 5:16, 27

[14] Doctrine and Covenants 20:69

[15] 2 Nephi 5:10, 27

[16] “Keep the Commandments,” Liahona, November 2015, 83

[17] John 14:15, 21

[18] Matthew 5:44

[19] Doctrine and Covenants 88:67

[20] Deuteronomy 6:5