

Balancing Life's Expectations



Arley Enesa
Director of Enterprise Information Systems, BYU-Hawaii
Devotional
April 02, 2019

O Mitsuru Clifford Kitashima ke kane

O Myrna Kahalokula ka wahine,

Noho pu laua ma Pauwela, Maui

A hanau ia mai o Michael Mitsuru Wailau Kitashima

O Antonio Bermijo ke kane

O Consuela Clave ka wahine,

Noho pu laua ma Waipahu, O'ahu

A hanau ia mai o Rozatta Ann Bermijo

O Michael Mitsuru Wailau Kitashima ke kane

O Rozatta Ann Bermijo ka wahine

Noho pu laua ma Kapolei, O'ahu

A hanau ia mai o Arley Leilokelani Kitashima

No'u keia kuaha ola ka haloa o ko'u 'ohana

Ola

Aloha,

I must forewarn you if you have not already noticed by now. I'm a crybaby. If you ask my family, they will tell you that I cry for anything and everything, they like to make fun of me, so please bear with me.

This is so crazy! First of all, I want to Mahalo my Heavenly Father and elder brother Jesus Christ who without them I would not be here today. I want to mahalo and aloha my parents who always have supported me in all that I have done, who gave me tough love and pushed me to be the person that I never thought I could be, for their strength and long suffering to provide and raise my brothers and I. To my grandparents and especially to my Tutu Lady who was the greatest example of #manawahine in my life. She was the epitome of how to be a gospel centered Hawaiian, and in so many ways she has shaped the person I have become today. To all of my kupuna and extended family who have come before and stand with me today who have laid the path and have given me a firm foundation to stand on. Mahalo to my husband, eternal companion, bestest friend and partner in crime and my keiki who are my inspiration and everything. And finally, mahalo nui for all of you for being here today. Mahalo, mahalo, mahalo.

I'll be honest, I don't like being here. I'd never thought I'd be here, never aspired to give a talk like this, and would rather be where you are, hiding in the dark. I don't like being in front of people, but with the support of Heavenly Father, I pray that the spirit may convey to you the message which is intended today.

I have always struggled with finding balance in my life. Trying to manage all the roles that we have; student, employee, mother, father, brother, sister, friend, leader, supporter, etc. Not to mention managing the expectations that comes from life, social expectations, worldly expectations, work expectations, church expectations, cultural expectations, family expectations - the list is crazy long. Many of the things that we come to value in life come from the way we were raised, the people we surround ourselves with and the world in which we live in. With all that we are expected to do and accomplish in this life it can be difficult to understand which, if any, of these roles or expectations we should focus on.

Ronald Brough describes it best as he talked about seeing a performer on the Ed Sullivan show as a young child. “There was a performer who would frequently appear on this show whose act consisted of an array of long wooden poles upon which he would carefully place ceramic plates. With a deft hand he would spin each plate while some silly “oompah” music played in the background. As he spun his fifth or sixth plate, inevitably plate number two or three would start to wobble, and he would have to hurry back to increase their spin before they crashed to the floor. It was a riveting display of skill, timing, and speed. Viewers across the nation watched eagerly to see if he could spin all of the plates on every wobbling dowel.” Life is all about balance, but how do we do that when there is so much that we are expected to do? How do we keep the plates from dropping?

What is your kuleana?

How do we understand what things are important in our lives? The best thing I could come up with to explain this is the word kuleana. Most commonly translated kuleana is the Hawaiian word for responsibility, but it is so much more than that. It’s hard to explain in words what this means. I asked my kids to explain what kuleana meant to them, here are some of their thoughts... It’s having a deep connection to something, doing things that make you trust worthy, things you do without having to be told and things that you do that have an effect on your personal life and the life of your future generations... When you understand kuleana you truly take on what it means to be responsible for it. To protect it, take care of it, to cultivate it. It is the difference between when your parents tell you to clean the yard and they say, “The yard is your kuleana.” It’s not just mowing the lawn, and picking up the rubbish and then you’re done, it means watering, fertilizing, weeding it, planting, doing maintenance, providing protection, etc. on a consistent basis - it means do everything associated with it whatever it may be.

I remember a few years back my husband and I were going to a trip without our children. They were young probably like between 5-9 years of age. As we were preparing to leave we sat down with the kids to talk about how they were to behave, that they were responsible to take care of each other, that they should get along with one another, “if you act up you’re gonna get it when we get home!” Probably not in those exact words but you get the picture! They were playing and seemed not to be paying attention as young children do. Then I turned to my oldest son and said to him “now when daddy’s away you are the priesthood holder of this house. It is your kuleana to watch over your siblings (even your older sister) and to take care of them.” As I mentioned the word kuleana his whole demeanor changed. I could tell the weight of the situation in his mind and heart had changed. Tears began to drop from his eyes as I knew he was internally taking on this responsibility. I knew he understood what we were asking and that he would follow through. Many of you might be thinking, “wow, how’s those parenting skills?” But it was our way of communicating to him that this was something worth deeper thought and understanding.

Knowing what is your kuleana can help to identify what things are most important in your life. What things do you have responsibility over? These kuleana can change from time to time so it takes constant reassessment. Looking over your life and deciding what things you will concentrate your time on is important. What may be your kuleana today may not be your kuleana tomorrow. Ask yourselves, “what do I feel I have the most kuleana for right now?” and keep those at the forefront. Whatever else we do is optional. We cannot spin all the plates at the same rate. Some require more kuleana than others. It’s ok to fail and drop a plate or decide it’s not for you. Sometimes putting that plate on the side to concentrate on what’s more important can be difficult but necessary.

Do your best, and the Lord will cover the rest.

When I started having babies, I struggled hard being a working mother. Our financial situation at the time did not allow me to be a stay-at-home mom. I was angry and upset. I wondered why I couldn’t be like the other moms. I felt an overwhelming guilt that I was choosing money and career over raising my children. It didn’t help that the church encouraged women to stay home and rear their children. I mentally and emotionally struggled leaving my children each day, feeling like I was letting them down and that people would think that I was a bad mother for going to work. There were many times when I told my husband, “I’m going to quit and just be a mom!” He never discouraged me and always left it up to me, which I resented even more. I wanted someone to tell me what to do, but no one would. I turned to my patriarchal blessing for help and was upset that when I read it, it did not give me the answers that I wanted - on the contrary it told me that this was something I could do it. I became jealous of those who could stay home and I felt inferior as a mother. I would see pictures of people on social media at the beach, doing craft projects and so much more cool, fun stuff. While my time with my children was spent forcing them to do their homework, making them chores and putting them to bed. I became more concerned with what others thought of me and what I thought about myself, than what the Lord thought of me. Granted, I tried all I could to get out of working, but it never panned out that way.

I kept telling myself ok, “If this happens, I’m going to quit and stay home,” or “Once this happens then I’m out.” Those things never happened; the Lord always met my ultimatums with an answer of His own. The Lord had and has a different plan for me. He has answered my pleas at every step, maybe not the way that I want Him to, but He does. He provides ways in which I can still be a mother and have a career. It has not been easy and I continue to struggle with not being able to be there for every second of my keiki’s childhood. But I have come to realize that we are all not intended to live the same life, and that we all have different responsibilities to fulfill; comparing ourselves to others does not help. Our success and failure should not be based on what others think, but on what the Lord thinks. If you give your all in all that you do, the Lord will bless you for your efforts. President Hinckley told a congregation, “If you do your best, it will all work out. Put your trust in God, and move forward with faith and confidence in the future. The Lord will not forsake us.” 5Elder Lowell M. Snow continues by saying “President Hinckley’s optimism sustained him through trials, feelings of inadequacy, and overwhelming pressures. And he stood by his conviction that “things will work out” even when he experienced setbacks and disappointments, heartache and loneliness.” The Lord has shown this to be true to me, time and time again.

As a side note, I mentioned that I must have read my patriarchal blessing like a million times over the years and I swear it specifically said that I could work, go to school and be a mother. Now as I have come to accept my role as a working mother, when I read my patriarchal blessing it doesn't exactly say that, it says something different. As our situation changes, the Lord continues to bless your efforts and continues to send us assistance depending on our circumstances.

Our family has been lucky enough to have the opportunity to care for a piece of farm land. When we first took a look at this place, I thought to myself, "There is no way we can do this, it's too big, too much work." It seemed like a long road ahead and I was super hesitant to commit to it. I mean it's not like I don't got stuff to do. However, this has always been something that we've wanted to do as parents (I would say family but I don't think my kids would say that this is something they wanted to do). We talked about it and made a commitment. When we first started it was just our family. We began pulling weeds and clearing the area the best we could. It was hard, back breaking work and it seemed even though we were making progress that it would take a significant time to get to a point that we could start to plant something. Our friend who asked us to help care for the land told us he'd be by soon to help, and we were like, "no worries we got it, when you have time, no rush." We don't like to burden others. Maybe it's a pride thing. We would go a few times a week to work on clearing the area. Our kids were a great help. It helped to speed up the process. One day my husband told me that our friends would come to help the next time we went up. I felt bad that they would spend their free time working in the hot sun pulling weeds and moving dirt. The day came and not only did our friends come, they brought machines that would help to clear the land quicker. As we watched the machines work my kids and I laughed at how easily the machines cleared the area. An area that took us days to clean was cleared in minutes. We wondered what the heck we were thinking by cleaning it by hand and why hadn't we done this from the start. We were so grateful for the effort and time that was given to help. The task to care for that piece of land seemed more achievable after that. I'm so grateful for the help we received, it has made our time working at the farm more enjoyable.

?

I don't like to depend on others, mostly because I don't want to burden them. I know they are busy too!! Asking for help is not something I am good at. I rather tell my husband do it!! It has taken me some time to learn how to ask for and accept the help of others. Through my life, I've been blessed by the kindness and charity of those who surround me. People who are always willing and able, whenever needed. I have loving family and friends who constantly pick up where I have fallen short and who are parents to my children when I am unable to. People who reach out when they don't even know how bad their help is needed, whether it's hanging on to my kids a bit longer when I'm running late or giving my child a ride home 'cause I forgot to pick them up for the 20th time. Even those who give me a kind word here and there, your love and aloha has touched my life more that you know. And then there are my keiki, who are just a huge help! They do their best to fulfill their kuleana, which as keiki in our home is not easy, and really just stepping up to the plate whenever I need them to. They are such a help to me and I appreciate all they do and sacrifice for our family. If we do not let others help us in our journey, we only burden ourselves.

When I decided that I wanted to train for a marathon I asked my good friend for some tips. She asked what is your goal? The first was, FINISH, no matter how long it took and the second was, not to stop running. She told me, “don’t get caught up in running the whole time it’s okay to walk, it’s actually better for you and you can probably finish faster if you do!” In my mind I thought, “but if you walk you’re weak!!” But she kept explaining, sometimes your body needs the rest. If you keep pushing too hard you can hurt yourself and might not even finish the race. Going through life is like running a marathon. It’s long, we need to take time for our self. Sometimes we have to stop running and walk so that we can finish the race. Mosiah 4:27 says “And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order.” With all the balancing that we have to do in life we need to malama/take care of ourselves. Find a hobby or “project” that gives you either time for yourself or a distraction from what you do day to day. Find successes even the little things you do like opening your eyes each day! During this time, pay attention to all the little things you have that you are grateful for and be optimistic about your future. Slowing down will give us time to reassess, rejuvenate and continue.

I remember going fishing on a boat many years ago with my husband and his friend when we had first gotten married. Both were experienced fisherman. At one point in the trip I had to use the bathroom. I leaned over to my husband who was driving the boat and told him, “hey, I gotta go pee.” He said, “go!” I told him, “what right here?” He said go to the back of the boat. His friend was sitting there and I was like, “um, no thank you, can’t I just jump into the water?” He said no, just go in the back of the boat and we will wash it off! I was like “um, no, can’t I just go in the water?” Like what’s the big deal? He still said no. I think we went back and forth for a good 10 minutes. Finally, he turned to me, obviously irritated, and said, “are you for real?” I said yes, I don’t want to pee in the boat! He was like whatever but you need to hold on to this rope! No matter what don’t let go of the rope! I was like, “ok, whatever’s hurry up I gottah go!” He handed me the rope and in my haste to go, as I jumped out of the boat... I let go of the rope! I didn’t even think it was a big deal at first as I was busy relieving myself. But as I watched his face he quickly began to panic! And if you know my husband he does not panic quickly! He and his friend began feverishly throwing things off the boat! I began to worry like what the heck are they doing? I started to notice how quickly the boat was moving away from me and how the items they threw off the boat began to drift quickly as well. I too began to panic and I began to swim to the boat. My husband yelled for me to stop and to swim to the life ring he had previously thrown in the water and wait. He and his friend worked to turned the boat around, and my husband kept his eye on me while his friend continued to drive the boat towards me. I could see the panic in his face begin to subside as the boat neared. He quietly pulled me into the boat and did not say a word as his friend tried to lighten the situation by cracking a few jokes. I knew that my husband was not happy. I was grateful he did not scold me in front of his friend. Now that I was safe, we went about gathering all the items they had thrown off the boat. I finally asked, “why did you throw all that in the water?” He turned to me and said: if you just look at the ocean the way it is right now, it looks clam and peaceful. However, beneath the surface there are currents and riptides that flow beneath. They can be strong and swift, they can go left or right, drag you down or they can be still. We threw the items in the water to mark the currents in the water, in case we lost sight of you, we would be able to follow the things we had thrown in and hopefully find you.

I did not see the danger that was beneath the surface of the water. I did not realize what could happen. I thought I knew what I was doing. Things turned out ok for me that day but sometimes we are not so lucky and can get lost in the deep blue sea of life. There are so many things that we juggle each day from work, school, family, friends. Some lead us in the same direction and others in the opposite direction and some just keep us in the same place. If we are not careful and lose focus on what we are trying to accomplish we can really lose our way. It's important to hold on to the iron rod – or the rope in this case - that we might not drift too far from the boat. When we let go, we take the risk of getting lost. I did not want to listen to the more experienced watermen, I wanted to do it my way. I didn't pay attention to the advice and I'm lucky that I wasn't lost at sea.

It can be so hard to listen to others at times, to our parents, to our spouses, to our leaders but all I got to say about that is Be obedient and keep being obedient. Just be obedient. There are times when I ask myself what the heck are you doing? Why must you insist on doing this? Look at all these people doing whatever they like and they ok. It's so hard to keep doing the right thing, why can't I just do what I want. I have this quote on my desk from Ezra Taft Benson that reminds me what strength comes from being obedient that says, "When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power." I know the Lord knows me. He knows I'm trying even when I don't want to. Sometimes you just do because you know it is the right thing to do and it's your kuleana and in the end the Lord will give you the strength to bear you up and continue.

I'm sorry to tell you that it doesn't get any easier or any better -our kuleana increases to more things and to more people as you go further in life. Continue to work, to keep spinning those plates and make adjustments as needed. Accept help from others and be humble by passing the plate to others from time to time. The Lord puts people in our life that help us to manage the stress and hardship of life's expectations. Listen and learn from those who have walked the path. They know more than you think. As your responsibilities become greater learn from your successes and failures and don't give up! As my daddy always says "take the good from each situation and leave the bad." Just keep moving forward. We are lucky to have our savior Jesus Christ and a loving Heavenly Father that helps lead the way and provides us a way to repent and try again. Learn to enjoy life's challenges and when it gets hard just endure. In D&C 24:8 it reads. "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days." The Lord promises us that if we are patience, he will be with us always, he will help us to balance and, in some cases, spin the plates when we least expect. Learn to balance and mitigate life's circumstances by staying close to the Lord and His teachings and most of all, try to stay in the boat! or at least hold on to the rope!

I leave this message with you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen

Ezra Taft Benson, in Donald L. Staheli, "Obedience—Life's Great Challenge," *Ensign*, May 1998, 82.

Facing the Future with Hope by Elder Lowell M. Snow of the Seventy

Teachings: Gordon?B. Hinckley,?339.