

First Presidency Message

Life's Obligations

By President Gordon B. Hinckley

Life's Obligations

Recently I addressed a group of college-age young people about some of the obligations of life with which they are faced, now and in the future. What was discussed with them has its own application for each of us.

The four obligations I have in mind are:

1. To one's vocation
2. To one's family
3. To the Church
4. To one's self

One: choose a vocation where you will be happy. You will spend eight and more hours a day at it through all the foreseeable future. Choose something that you enjoy doing. Income is important, but you do not need to be a multimillionaire to be happy. In fact, you are more likely to be unhappy if wealth becomes your only objective. You will become a slave to it. It will color all your decisions. You need enough to get along on. You need enough to provide well for your family. It will be better if the husband becomes the provider and the wife does not work when children come. That situation may be necessary in some cases, but if you choose wisely now, it is not likely to become a requirement.

Choose a field in which you can grow. You need the stimulation of new effort and new ambitions, of new discoveries and new challenges.

Get all the schooling you can to qualify yourselves in your chosen vocations. In this world, competition is terrible. It eats up people. It destroys many. But it must be faced; it is something with which we have to deal.

Choose something that will be stimulating and thought-provoking and that will carry with it the day-to-day opportunity to do something to improve the society of which you will become a part.

These are the great days of your preparation for your future work. Do not waste them. Take advantage of them. Cram your heads full of knowledge. Assimilate it. Think about it. Let it become a part of you.

But with all of this, in choosing a vocation you should bear in mind that there are other things in life that are of tremendous importance also. The greatest task of all, the greatest challenge, and the greatest satisfaction lie in the rearing of a good family. There must also be time for service in the Church. Otherwise these very important dimensions of your life will be relegated to a back burner.

Life has a way of moving us in our vocational work from one thing to another. This likely will happen more in the future. The education you receive can become a solid foundation on which to build a career that may cover many fields of endeavor.

Two: family. Every normal young man desires a wife. Every normal young woman desires a husband. Be worthy of the mate you choose. Respect him or her. Give encouragement to him or her. Love your companion with all your heart. This will be the most important decision of your life, the individual whom you marry.

There is no substitute for marrying in the temple. It is the only place under the heavens where marriage can be solemnized for eternity. Don't cheat yourself. Don't cheat your companion. Don't shortchange your lives. Marry the right person in the right place at the right time.

Choose a companion of your own faith. You are much more likely to be happy. Choose a companion you can always honor, you can always respect, one who will complement you in your own life, one to whom you can give your entire heart, your entire love, your entire allegiance, your entire loyalty. Determine that there will never be anything that will come between you that will disrupt your marriage. Make it work. Resolve to make it work. There is far too much of divorce, wherein hearts are broken and sometimes lives are destroyed. Be fiercely loyal one to another.

You will not always be young and handsome or young and beautiful. There will come a time in life when instead of growing taller you will begin to shrink. I recall recently sitting down at the dinner table with my wife. I looked across the table at her hands, once so beautiful, now gnarled and wrinkled. I found myself with tears in my eyes. Pictures of the days of her young womanhood flooded my memory. I saw her when the children were small and she was young and strong, taking them everywhere and looking after their every need. She cooked and sewed, she washed and kept house, she went to their performances, she read books and attended concerts, she served in the Church in a variety of positions, and she was so very bright and beautiful and happy.

We have now been married for more than 61 years. That is a long time. We have grown old and wrinkled. But our love and respect and loyalty one for another have remained undimmed. Our children have grown. We have grandchildren who are grown, and we have great-grandchildren who are well on their way. I could not wish for any of you more than I have had in my companionship with my beautiful wife.

A good marriage requires time. It requires effort. You have to work at it. You have to cultivate it. You have to forgive and forget. You have to be absolutely loyal one to another. Most of you will marry and have children. They will become the source of

your greatest pride and happiness. I hope so. Rear them in love. You don't have to kick them around. You don't have to get angry with them. You just have to love them. If they make mistakes, forgive them and help them to avoid a repetition. But let them see in you their truest and best friend, their constant support.

All of this can come to pass if you make this most important decision, one guided by prayer as well as instinct, of choosing a dear companion who will be yours through thick and thin forever, throughout all eternity.

Three: service in the Church. Let the Church be your dear friend. Let it be your great companion. Serve wherever you are called to serve. Do what you are asked to do. Every position you hold will add to your capacity. I have served in many responsibilities in this great organization. Every service brought its own reward.

This, too, will require your unselfish devotion, your unyielding loyalty and faith. You will serve in many capacities before your lives are complete. Some of them may seem small, but there is no small or unimportant calling in this Church. Every calling is important. Every calling is necessary to the advancement of the work. Never demean a responsibility in the Church. I listened recently to a speaker in our ward sacrament meeting. For many years he had served as a bishop and in many other capacities. But he spoke of a wonderful assignment that he and his wife recently had to nurture a new convert who had come into the Church, a young mother with three children. They taught her regularly, once a week. They built her testimony. They taught her the gospel in all its various aspects. They encouraged her with the assignments she had in the ward. They were always there to answer her questions, to enlighten her, to bring understanding of some doctrine that was unclear. They had done this until she and her children had strength to move with security on their own. The young mother and her children have now moved to another area. But this woman, who became the beneficiary of their interest, continues to write to them with expressions of love and appreciation.

Make room for the Church in your life. Let your knowledge of its doctrine grow. Let your understanding of its organization increase. Let your love for its eternal truths become ever and ever stronger.

The Church may call upon you to make sacrifice. It may call upon you to give of the very best that you have to offer. There will be no cost in this, because you will discover that it will become an investment that will pay you dividends for as long as you live. The Church is the great reservoir of eternal truth. Embrace it and hold fast to it.

Four: there is yet another interest that you must look after as you look forward in your lives. You need time to meditate and ponder, to think, to wonder at the great plan of happiness that the Lord has outlined for His children. You need to read the scriptures. You need to read good literature. You need to partake of the great culture which is available to all of us.

I heard President David O. McKay say to the members of the Twelve on one occasion, "Brethren, we do not spend enough time meditating."

I believe that with all my heart. Our lives become extremely busy. We run from one thing to another. We wear ourselves out in thoughtless pursuit of goals which are highly ephemeral. We are entitled to spend some time with ourselves in introspection, in development. I remember my dear father when he was about the age that I am now. He lived in a home where there was a rock wall on the grounds. It was a low wall, and when the weather was warm, he would go and sit on his wall. It seemed to me he sat there for hours, thinking, meditating, pondering things that he would say and write, for he was a very gifted speaker and writer. He read much, even into his very old age. He never ceased growing. Life was for him a great adventure in thinking.

Your needs and your tastes along these lines will vary with your age. But all of us need some of it. I decry the great waste of time that people put into watching inane television. I am not antisports. I enjoy watching a good football game or a good basketball game. But I see so many men who become absolutely obsessed with sports. I believe their lives would be enriched if, instead of sitting on the sofa and watching a game that will be forgotten tomorrow, they would read and think and ponder.

They would be blessed if they were to go out into the dark of the night, look at the stars, and ponder their place in the eternal plan of the Almighty. I think David must have been by himself under the starry heavens when he declared:

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

“For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Ps. 8:3–5).

Well, my dear brothers and sisters throughout the Church, resolve to keep balance in your lives, to work at a good vocation that you can greatly enjoy, to rear an honorable family who will walk in righteousness and with faith, to serve the Church in a wonderful and unselfish manner and grow tremendously while so doing, and to ponder the things of life as occasionally you sit by yourself and simply think and offer a word of prayer to the God who is the giver of all these wonderful things.

God bless each of us in our lives. May we live close to the Lord and walk in faith with Him, and may we bear witness and testimony of His goodness to each of us.

Ideas for Home Teachers

Some Points of Emphasis

You may wish to make these points in your home teaching discussions:

1. Life presents us with many obligations, which include obligations:
 - to one's vocation
 - to one's family
 - to the Church
 - to one's self
2. When you choose a vocation, choose one where you will be happy.
3. The choice you make for your marriage companion will be the most important decision of your life.
4. Let the Church be your dear friend. Serve where you are called.
5. Each of us needs time to meditate and think of the great plan of happiness that the Lord has outlined for us, time to read the scriptures, time to partake of the good parts of our culture.

Discussion Helps

1. Relate your feelings about how the gospel helps us meet the obligations we face in life.
2. Are there some scriptures or quotations in this article that the family might read aloud and discuss?
3. Would this discussion be better after a previsit chat with the head of the house? Is there a message from the bishop or quorum leader?