

Living a Balanced Life Brings Happiness

by

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What a pleasure to be here. I'm thrilled when I meet with young people, and older people as well. I was with my wife in St. George last weekend, presiding at a college stake, and just a few months ago I was in Idaho Falls, Idaho, reorganizing the stake presidency at a student stake at Idaho State University. I must admit that meeting with the young single adults and young married adults has been a great pleasure for me. I thoroughly enjoy that.

I'd like to read a couplet from William Butler Yeats' classic poem, "The Second Coming."

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*

This was a poem written by Yeats in 1920, and is very apropos today. As I read the newspaper this morning and considered the possibility of civil war in Iraq, I thought how appropriate this couplet is. Just a few months ago I was in Kurgystan and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, countries which are very near Iraq and Afghanistan, and sensed the confusion among some of the American troops who were there with respect to what the future held in store for them. I'm concerned about what the future holds in store for all of us. I hope we can reflect a little bit upon that together, as we speak here today.

I'm reminded of the story about the Silent Monk Society, which I heard while living in Moscow. A young man who was very slow of speech and in fact did not like to speak, heard about the Silent Monk Society and learned that if one were admitted into that monastery, he could only utter two words every five years. And he thought, "That's for me." So he was admitted into the society and after the first five years he appeared before the presiding monk, who said, "Okay, my son, what have you to say?"

And he said, "Bad food."

Well, another five years went by and he appeared for the utterance of his two words again, and the presiding monk said, "What have you to say now?"

And he said, "Hard bed."

Well, another five years passed, and now he's been in for 15 years and was a bit weary, I suppose. Upon appearing before the presiding monk he was asked once more, "What have you to say?"

And he said, "Want out."

Well, I don't "want out" today, I want in. I'm very pleased to be here with you. I'm here today representing the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles under whose keys members of the quorums of the Seventy serve. I'm mindful that the purpose of LDS Business College is to teach business skills in a spiritual setting. Thus, it seeks to provide opportunity for balance in one's life. Parenthetically, some 15 or 16 years ago, my daughter-in-law, Christina Predovich, finished a two-year course here. Chris received a very good education from here, and she's been able to mix that education and her business skills with being an at-home mother, and spend some time working out of her home.

I suspect that everyone here wants to have the kind of life which will bring lasting happiness. So I will assume that this is your ultimate goal. I do not know of anyone who does not want to be happy. The Lord in speaking to Moses said, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39)

Happiness, I believe, will come through charting a course leading to immortality and eternal life, and will be hastened and facilitated by heeding the promptings of the Spirit and by achieving proper balance in one's life. When I speak of balance, I make reference to spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, and economic factors. Balance is defined as mental and emotional steadiness; to bring into harmony or proportion. A balancing act is defined as our attempt to cope with several, often conflicting, factors or situations at the same time. When I refer to happiness, I speak of joy or a state of well-being and contentment, or a satisfying experience.

Now, there are certain challenges or impediments to balance and happiness. I believe that each of us must, at some point in time, focus his attention on whom and what he wants to be and become. I recall as a young boy living next door to a friend whose father owned a large herd of sheep and who hired Mexican sheep herders. This particular family had nine children. My first vision of the future was to marry a Mexican dancing girl, have nine children, and be a sheep herder. Now you might say, "Well, what kind of a vision is that?" And I would respond, well, I could see myself rounding up the sheep in the evening and returning to my sheep camp to watch my dancing-girl wife dance around the fire and prepare a meal and see our family grow up. Well, what's wrong with that? Nothing. I had a vision. I had a dream. And that kept me going. That evolved into wanting to be a driver of a ten-wheel truck, and then to wanting to be a doctor, and then, following my mission in France, to wanting to become a lawyer. And so that's where I have finally ended up in my eternal quest to this day.

Now I suppose I would have to say that my vision is to be a worthy servant of our Heavenly Father. Having received a call to serve and be an especial witness of Jesus Christ to the nations of the earth, my dream is to do the very best I can possibly do at that. As you know, coping with the complex and diverse challenges of everyday life can upset the balance and harmony which we seek. All, or at least most I think, are often overwhelmed as they seek to obtain and maintain balance in their lives. I provide these illustrations, adapted from a May 1987 *Ensign* article, written by Elder M. Russell Ballard (“Keeping Life’s Demands in Balance”):

A single student said, “I know that the scriptures and today’s Church leaders say we should not unnecessarily delay marriage and having a family. But I’m 26. I haven’t completed my education, and I don’t have a job which will enable me to support a family. Can I not be excused from marrying, at least for now?”

Another said, “I am a woman, and no one has asked me to marry him. How can I keep this commandment?”

A young mother said, “There is no balance in all my life. I am completely consumed in completing my education and caring for my children. I hardly have time to think of anything else. Sometimes, I think the world and the Church expect too much of me. Regardless of how hard I work, I never will live up to everyone’s expectations. My struggle is between self-esteem, confidence and feeling self-worth versus feelings of guilt, depression and discouragement for not doing everything I am told we must do to attain the celestial kingdom.”

A young father added: “School requires all my time. I realize that I am neglecting my wife and children and my church callings, but if I can just get through this year, I will make enough money, and then things will settle down.”

Oh, what a dreamer he was. Life doesn’t get easier; life gets more and more complicated. Don’t dream about tomorrow having more time and less responsibility, but prepare to face that which is coming tomorrow by practicing what you’ll need to do then today, under your current circumstances.

Another single student said, “I have to work to put myself through school. I don’t have enough time for homework and church service. How can I be expected to live a balanced life?” And another said, “We hear so many contrasting views that it is hard to always know what is right and what is wrong.”

I’ve heard many students as well as non-students say, “No one knows better than I do how important exercise is, but I just have no time in my day for exercising.”

Additionally, following the recent satellite broadcast on families, a sister was heard to say this: “Sister Parkin said that the man is to provide and protect and the woman to nurture. How, in today’s world, can a couple provide for and protect their family, if the woman doesn’t work outside the home? There just isn’t enough money to cover all the bases, if the woman doesn’t work.”

Well, although time will not permit a response to all of these frustrations which I've noted, I hope that the following comments and references will be helpful. Should we abandon pursuit of a higher education and otherwise developing and strengthening self? Should we abandon pursuit of marriage and family? Should we cease preparing to provide for support and maintenance of ourselves and our family? Should we forget church service? Well, the obvious answer to each of these questions is in the negative. Consider these references:

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that one of the fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from where it may. He taught, "The glory of God is intelligence." (D&C 93:36) And yet further, "Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection." (D&C 130:18)

Neal A. Maxwell, a former member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, explained the objectives of Church education in these words: "Literacy and basic education are gospel needs. Without literacy, individuals are handicapped, spiritually, intellectually, physically, socially and economically. Education is often not only the key to the individual member's economic future, but also to his opportunities for self realization, for full church service, and for contributing to the world around him—spiritually, politically, culturally and socially."

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "An old cliché states that modern education leads a man to know more and more about less and less. I want to plead with you to keep balance in your lives. Do not become obsessed with what may be called a gospel hobby. Remember, a good meal always includes more than one course. You ought to have great strength in your chosen field of expertise, but I warn you against making that your only interest."

I glory in the breadth of the comment from Doctrine and Covenants 88:77-80 which talks about gaining knowledge about the nations, about different principles, about the sciences, about the literary works and so forth. I won't take time to read that but, again, the citation is section 88, verses 77-80. And President Hinckley goes on: "Now and then I have watched a man become obsessed with a narrow segment of knowledge. I have worried about him. Beware of obsession. Beware of narrowness. Let your interests range over many good fields while working with growing strength in the field of your own profession."

President Hinckley teaches that "All of us in this Church have a four-fold responsibility. 1) to our families; 2) to our employers; 3) to the Lord, and 4) but not lastly, really, to ourselves. Take some time to do a little meditating, to do a little exercise, whatever." I've noted often as I've flown, as we commence to take off from the airport, a flight attendant will arise and among other things she will say, "Now if there's an absence of cabin pressure, there will descend an oxygen mask from overhead. And if you're caring for young children or a disabled person, make sure you affix that oxygen mask to yourself before you try to help others." Now, why would the flight attendant say that? Obviously, because if you're unconscious, you can't help your child, or you can't help

that disabled person. And so it is with our service to humankind, our service in the Church, our professions. If we don't strengthen ourselves, then we will never be in a position to strengthen and to help others.

Now this is a four-fold responsibility, which I've mentioned. How do you balance these four responsibilities in our lives? President Hinckley says, "I don't think that's difficult. You just have to sit down now and look at your resources. The major resource in this matter is time. I think you can do it." You balance it. You organize yourselves, as the Lord said, so that you can make that balance."

President James E. Faust, speaking of the need for balance in our lives, remarked: "It is much easier for those who have a righteous balance to yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19). Then we can leave behind the attributes of the natural man or woman and become someone much more enlightened." ("The Need for Balance in Our Lives," *Ensign*, March 2000)

Amulek counseled his brethren to "contend no more against the Holy Ghost." (Alma 34:38) The gifts of the Holy Ghost have special strengths for those who study and learn. The Holy Ghost, shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance. Yes, "the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and...it shall flow unto thee forever and ever," (D&C 121:46) President Faust continued, "Balance, in large measure, is knowing the things that can be changed and put in proper perspective, and recognizing the things that will not change. Much of the rest in obtaining sound balance lies in our attitude." (Ibid).

Let me share three personal experiences. I grew up in Panguitch, Utah, a small town of 1500 people. I was a big fish in a little pond. When I graduated from high school, I received a scholarship—academic and athletic—to attend Brigham Young University. When I got there, I quickly discovered that I was a little fish in a huge pond, and I became quickly discouraged. I thought, "I want to get out of here." I started to go home on weekends. I attended church at home, not on campus. I didn't keep my grades at level where I ought to have kept them. I didn't get acquainted with people. By the end of the year, I said, "I'm not going to return. This is not for me."

I went home and lifted hundred-pound bales of hay all summer and rode horses, and I finally discovered about mid-August that indeed, I wanted to return. So I did. But I immediately joined a social fraternity and a service organization. I moved into the dormitory. I started attending church on campus rather than going home on weekends. I began to realize that life on campus was really a good life, and I was happy I was there. My grades improved. I didn't get my scholarship back because I missed trying out for the basketball team, but I was having a happy experience now.

My first year of law school, after having gone through a pre-medical course at BYU, was very difficult. I was studying a different discipline altogether, and my grades, again, were not as good as they should have been. The second year, I got a job in a law firm, a part-time job while going to school. I noticed that my grades began to improve. At the

end of my second year, I married my wife Joy. I noticed that with that added responsibility along with working and going to school, everything started to go better. My grades became even better than they had ever been before.

Lastly, when I passed the bar exam, a salty old trial lawyer came to me and said, “Bob, you can’t be a successful, effective trial lawyer and an active member of the LDS Church at the same time.”

I thought, “Well, that’s an interesting perspective.” I looked around, and I saw the James E. Fausts and the Eugene Hansens and others who were very successful in their law practice and extremely active in the Church, and I thought, well, I’m going to be active in the Church. It didn’t affect my success as a trial lawyer at all. In fact, it enhanced it. It made me a better lawyer. Why? Because I had balance in my life. Another reason is, I was trying to do what the Lord had asked me to do, and I think He gave me added strength, added understanding, and added help.

Now most of us are on the brink of making at least one of these major life decisions: How much education should I pursue? Should I serve a mission? Should I marry, and if so, whom should I marry? What if I don’t have the opportunity to marry? What then? Should I work outside the home? Where should I live?

Answers to these and other major life decisions will be more likely to produce balance and happiness in one’s life if they come through the promptings of the Spirit. How does one obtain the Spirit, and then the answers he seeks? I have some suggestions. I know I’m not going to be able to go through all of them, but let me suggest that first we need to attend sacrament meeting every week, and we need to partake of the sacrament. I’d like to read from the sacrament prayer on the bread, and you’ll quickly see what I’m getting at. “O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ,” and so, we’re praying together, along with the priests at the sacrament table, to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Advocate before the Father, “to bless and sanctify [or make holy] this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it.” Why? “That they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son.” And so, as we partake of the sacrament, we remember Christ, and we remember his suffering for us. “And witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son.” And so we covenant, when we partake of the sacrament, as we did at the edge of the waters of baptism, that we will take upon us the name of the Son. “And always remember him, and keep his commandments which he has given them.” We have to keep the commandments, and we renew our covenant to do that each week as we partake of the Sacrament. Now why? Why do we do all this? Why do we agree to do all of this, and why should we do it? Well, the last clause in this sacrament prayer answers that question: “That they may always have his Spirit to be with them.” (D&C 20:77)

So therein lies the key to having the Spirit with us, which will help us answer the vital questions of life which we face here today. We should kneel down upon our knees and pray, regularly. We should serve. We should be willing to serve our fellow men. We should reach out in love and fear not. “[Thou] should not have feared man more than

God,” said the Lord. (D&C 3:7) “Perfect love casteth out fear,” said the Lord. (1 John 4:18)

I did a mission tour with F. Enzo Busche a few years ago, and he told us of his conversion. Missionaries came to him for over a period of a year, and they invited him to go to church, and they invited him to be baptized. And he said, “I didn’t want to go to church, and I didn’t want to be baptized. I didn’t believe in the doctrine.” And he said “The missionaries were somewhat devastated after teaching me for a year, when I said that.” But he said, “Finally, two young men came along whom I hadn’t met before, and every time I went on a business trip,” and this was a very successful businessman, “there was a note waiting at my hotel, saying, ‘Mr. Busche, just wanted you to know we were thinking of you, and hope you’ll have a good trip.’”

He said, “They would stop by my office and leave a similar note, quite regularly. And they would pass by my home, even when they didn’t have an appointment with me, knock on the door and say, ‘Mr. Busche, we were just in the neighborhood. We won’t come in because we have another appointment, but we just wanted you to know we’re thinking about you.’”

He said, “After a few weeks of that, I began to believe that those two young men cared for me. I began to believe even that they loved me, and I had never had that kind of a feeling from anyone in my whole life, even from my parents.” And here’s the clincher. He said, “When I knew that the missionaries cared for me, and when I knew that they loved me, the doctrine began to make sense.”

And so, more and more meaning to the statement that on love hang all the law and the prophets. (See Matthew 22:40) So let’s partake of the sacrament worthily. Let’s pray regularly. Let’s stand up to serve. Let’s reach out in love and fear not. And let’s find our wilderness, like Christ did after his baptism and before he entered into his ministry. He went into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights to be with God. He was tempted of the devil, but He came down out of the wilderness after that forty day and forty night experience, in the power of the Spirit, and He taught in the synagogues. And those who heard him saw that he was different, that he taught now with power and with authority.

Let me conclude by saying that if we will do what is necessary to have the Spirit with us, the Spirit will teach us all things. The Spirit will help us in our studies. The Spirit will help us make decisions about our life’s pursuits. And the Spirit will give us peace, and a feeling of calmness. Do we have to ask for it? Well, yes. We do have to ask the Lord for the Spirit.

I’ll conclude by reading this passage from Luke, chapter 18: “And he [the Lord] spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

“Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

“And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.” She wanted help from the judge because someone had done her wrong.

“And he, the judge would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

“Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

“And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

“I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.” (verses 1-8)

The Lord hears and answers prayers. Sometimes I think we tend to give up too soon when we pray to Him. We need to persist in our prayers to Him. The concluding lines of Yeats’ “The Second Coming” cited earlier seem a fitting conclusion:

*The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

Now apply that to the situation in the world today. In counterpoint to the passionate intensity of the worst, the Savior’s admonition refreshes us like an oasis. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

My testimony to you today is that we can overcome the world, if we will seek balance in our lives. If we will seek to have the Spirit with us at all times and be faithful in responding to the promptings of the Spirit, we will be blessed. I testify to you as an especial witness of Jesus Christ, called to bear testimony to the nations of the world, that Jesus Christ lives. He’s our Savior. He knows you and He knows me. He knows what’s in our minds and what’s in our hearts. And He will be our advocate before the Father if we will keep the covenants we make as we partake of the sacrament each week. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.