

“Simplification and Inspiration”

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Congratulations on being a BYU-Pathway Worldwide student! Your choice to gain additional education will bless your life. But you may feel overwhelmed because you are balancing many aspects of life. You may feel time-constrained, never completing well any of the tasks you have. It can be exhausting! Today, my invitation to you is to simplify your life and trust in God’s ability to help you.

From Liberty Jail, Joseph Smith authored these optimistic words, “Therefore ... let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.”¹ When he said, “do all things that lie in our power,” Joseph implied that you should focus on things that are important and expend a reasonable effort accomplishing those things.

He neither implied that you do every possible thing, nor that you run faster than you are able; your effort needs to be sustainable. To know what things are most important, though, you need the help of the Holy Ghost. Once you know your path is inspired, commit to make the reasonable, Spirit-directed effort. As you do, you can count on God’s help.

At age 27, my wife, Ruth, felt inspired to go to law school. This was a busy time; I was in my medical training and serving as the bishop of our ward in Baltimore, Maryland. We were raising our three-year-old daughter and Ruth was recovering from a serious illness. Importantly, Ruth and I both received confirmation from the Holy Ghost that this was the right course to follow.

With faith and inspiration, Ruth developed a plan to carve out the necessary time for her studies. She simplified our lives. She made a list of things she would not let fall through the cracks and things that became optional. She carefully considered her available time and decided what was mission-critical and what was not. Activities that she determined were essential included taking time for personal daily acts of devotion, taking time with our daughter to read and play each day, attending Church, and so on.

The optional things, which she decided to no longer do, included balancing the check book, scrubbing the floor on hands and knees, and ironing my shirts. Then, she chose not to feel guilty about not doing those optional things and cheerfully gave a reasonable effort to the critical things. We saw God’s arm revealed in every aspect of our lives. Ruth did very well in law school and went on to a remarkable career as a wife, mother, and attorney. Reduction and simplification became the means by which she achieved her inspired goals.

To simplify and balance the demands of your life requires that you keep your eye on the most important responsibilities that you are juggling. Here is what I mean. When our daughter was 10 years old, she wanted a puppy. I thought we should get a German Shepherd, Labrador, or Pit Bull, and give it a name, like Spike. That way, when I walked the dog people would say, “There goes Dale with that masculine dog.”

My wife, on the other hand, felt we should get a more petite dog and give it a more feminine name. When these kinds of differences in opinion occur in a marriage, you learn that you rationally discuss the situation, evaluate

¹ Doctrine and Covenants 123:17

advantages and disadvantages, and resolve the conflict. In this case, we did so and eventually came up with a compromise. We got a toy poodle and named her Lady.

From the perspective of achieving my manly goals, Lady was worthless, but she was good at fetching a ball. I could throw a ball, and she would bring it back to me. She was willing to do this any time, any place, and for as long as anyone was willing to throw the ball. One time, I became bored. So, I threw two balls. I then saw something I did not expect.

Lady ran to the first ball, picked it up, started running back, and then saw the second ball. She dropped the first ball, ran to the second ball, picked it up, and began running to me again. Then, she seemed to think of the first ball, dropped the second ball, turned around, ran to the first ball, and picked it up.

As she ran past the second ball, she stopped, dropped the first ball, picked up the second ball, and began running again. She came to a screeching halt, dropped the second ball, ran back to the first ball, picked up first ball, and as she was running back, stopped once again. She dropped the first ball, looked back and forth from the second ball to the first ball, and then walked away, tail between her legs, went to her basket, lay down, and put her paws over her eyes.

Two balls were one too many for our puppy, and it is the same for you. Keep your eye on the mission-critical balls that will bring you the greatest happiness — the gospel of Jesus Christ and your family. Do not neglect your personal, private, daily acts of devotion: prayer, studying the scriptures, and attending Church services. These actions will help you have the guidance of the Holy Ghost to help you succeed in your goals.

I know that Jesus Christ loves you, I know that Heavenly Father loves you, and that They will help you accomplish the desirable things in your life, including the education you're pursuing, and having all the other blessings that are in store for you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.