

Opportunities Are What You Make of Them

EIGHT FUNDAMENTAL GUIDEPOSTS

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I AM very cognizant of the diversity of graduates who sit before me tonight, as several disciplines are represented. But each of you is part of a team endeavor, dedicated to the service for which you were trained. For those departing from our midst, graduation day is of course the END OF ONE CHAPTER and the BEGINNING OF ANOTHER. Many of you will leave here tonight to do many different things. Some of you will begin immediately to put your present TRAINING TO WORK, others will enter into programs of FURTHER TRAINING; but all, I hope, will begin a rewarding journey down the open road to SERVICE, OPPORTUNITY, and ADVENTURE.

That is what I want to talk to you about this evening. At this particular and special time in your life, it may be appropriate to consider for a moment WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF THE OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD OF YOU, and WHAT WILL BE YOUR RESPONSE TO THESE OPPORTUNITIES WHEN YOU DO MEET THEM?

Opportunities will be present along the road you will travel from here tonight, but I must warn you that along this road there are eight (8) important fundamental GUIDEPOSTS. These GUIDEPOSTS must be followed if you are to take full advantage of the opportunities you will meet. My final effort to prepare you is to list them for you.

The FIRST of these GUIDEPOSTS reads: BE ABLE TO ENDURE. Some people think that success is that old ABC Theory — Ability, Breaks and Courage. Others want to climb the ladder of success, but they are waiting for an elevator. However, there is more to success than the old ABC concept. One must be able to ENDURE by dealing with the obstacles that they are confronted with in life. Booker T. Washington once said, "I have learned that success is to be measured NOT so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." Each of us will have more than enough heartaches and disappointments to deal with in the future. Regardless of the opposition, you must ENDURE in order to survive and be successful. A boxer demonstrated his endurance by *Fighting One More Round*. He said:

"Fight one more round. When your feet are so tired that you have to shuffle back to the center of the ring, fight one more round.

"When your arms are so tired that you can hardly lift your hands to come on guard, fight one more round.

"When your nose is bleeding and your eyes are black and you are so tired that you wish your opponent would crack one on the jaw and put you to sleep, fight one more round. Remembering that the person who always fights one more round is never whipped."

Don't be defeated by any disappointments. Endure by constantly fighting one more round and that will eventually conquer your disappointments.

The SECOND GUIDEPOST along the road of opportunities reads: BE CURIOUS! Michaelangelo while working on one of his last pieces of art said, "I am still learning." You have learned much up to this point while attending Draughton's; but that is no reason for not WANTING or NEEDING to know more. If anything, THE KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU NOW HAVE SHOULD MAKE YOU MORE INQUISITIVE about the things you do NOT know. There is still so much that is not known by anyone; there are still so many new frontiers, so many problems to be solved. Benjamin Franklin said, "The doors of knowledge are never shut." You surely know how rapidly all of the careers that you have been trained for have advanced and are still advancing. Just over the last couple of decades, the typewriter, for example, went from a manual, to an electric, to an electric self-correcting, to a wordprocessing system. If you learn no more than you know now, YOUR ABILITY and YOUR VALUE in your chosen career will be at rock bottom in the next fifteen years. John Walton, a great basketball coach at UCLA in the 1970s said, "LEARN as if you were to LIVE FOREVER. LIVE as if you were to DIE TOMORROW." Complacency has destroyed many. It is imperative that you constantly strive to learn. Be CURIOUS! Find out all you can and keep on looking and learning as if you WERE TO LIVE FOREVER. Do NOT be so busy chopping wood that you have no time to sharpen your axe. Henry Ford said that "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether this happens at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps on learning not only remains young but becomes constantly more VALUABLE, regardless of PHYSICAL CAPACITY.

The THIRD GUIDEPOST along the road of opportunities says BE CONSIDERATE. In one of Mark Twain's writings, he

said that "KINDNESS is a language which the DEAF CAN HEAR and the BLIND CAN READ." Being considerate has become a lost art in our society. If being considerate is not dead then it is certainly quite ill. The Good Samaritan, you remember, did not have to stop when he saw the man the robbers had left bleeding on the road. In fact, it was rather expected that he would not stop, but he did. Being considerate means going beyond the EXPECTATIONS; it means doing more than just getting by. WE must all learn to be more sensitive to the feelings of others. This is a serious matter, for it is an attitude not too popular in a world where the drift of things is in the other direction. A warm, bighearted consideration has a worth that simply cannot be measured. It might well have been the 11th commandment. Thou shalt be CONSIDERATE.

The FOURTH GUIDEPOST says BE CONCERNED. That CONCERN translates into other attributes such as being COMPASSIONATE and being CONSCIENTIOUS. Its key word is CARE. If you CARE, you will give of yourself to support those values worthy of your patronage, your influence, your time, your money. You will take part in community and civic affairs, your church, your alumni association, and the organized societies that represent your profession. And above all, if you care, you will be honest, you will be ethical, you will be an asset to your job — a credit, and not a liability. Remember, your colleagues, your teachers, your family, your friends, your school, and those whom you serve, deserve the best you can give. So do more than exist — CARE. Reach the unreached within your reach.

The FIFTH GUIDEPOST along the road of opportunities says BE CONSTRUCTIVE. That is one of the hardest things to practice in day-to-day living. One habit that mars our chances of being constructive is the habit of complaining. Being dissatisfied is an excellent qualification for building a better world, but you must remember that dissatisfaction is a soil that grows the world's cynics as well as its servants. Dissatisfaction that SEEKS AND FINDS the answer PRODUCES the PUBLIC SERVANT, the BUILDER of a NEW DAY, the DISCOVERER of a BETTER WAY. Dissatisfaction that has NO ANSWERS produces the CRITIC and the COMPLAINER against humanity and life in general. Being constructive calls for a great deal of patience. It calls for following through from dream to deed . . . the only way to keep our dreams from evaporating into nothing.

The SIXTH GUIDEPOST reads, BE ENTHUSIASTIC! The longer I live, the more certain I am that ENTHUSIASM is the little recognized SECRET of SUCCESS. The difference in ACTUAL SKILL, ABILITY, and INTELLIGENCE, between those who succeed and those who fail, is usually neither WIDE nor STRIKING. But if two workers are nearly equally matched, the one who is ENTHUSIASTIC will find the scales tipped in his or her favor. And the one of second-rate ability who is enthusiastic will often outstrip the one of first-rate ability who is not enthusiastic. Be ENTHUSIASTIC!

The SEVENTH GUIDEPOST along the road of opportunities says: BE IN CONTROL OF SELF. Nothing left loose ever does anything creative. No horse gets anywhere until he is harnessed. No steam or gas ever drives anything until it is confined. No falling water is ever turned into light and power until it is funneled. No life grows until it is FOCUSED, DEDICATED, and DISCIPLINED. Napoleon Hill says "Our mind is the only thing we can control. Either we control it, or we relinquish control to other forces, and our minds and our wills

become as chips in a puddle of water, being swept one way, then another and never coming to any satisfactory conclusions, easily falling prey to any negative wind that blows." Be in CONTROL OF SELF.

The LAST of these GUIDEPOSTS is integrity. It is an old-fashioned virtue and it may be thought by some to be outmoded; but nothing survives to become old fashioned unless its value has been tested over a long span of time. Integrity is that quality of incorruptibility, and of adhering to sincerely held principles and beliefs, which provides a firm base upon which to build your life. Faced with conflicting choices, adverse temptations, and shifting values, unless you have firm principles and adhere to them, you may be swayed this way and that way until you lose your senses of WHO you are and WHAT you stand for. If you guard your integrity, keeping it untarnished, you will have a peace of mind and a clarity of conscience . . . intangible but priceless.

Integrity has its practical value too. Confidence and trust, which provide the basis for all good relationships, must be built. On the job, integrity is that quality which causes a worker to do his best, not for the supervisor, but for himself. It is an honesty of spirit which does NOT GO UNNOTICED. Promotions come to those who can be trusted. Lack of it can cause demotion or loss of employment. Good relationships are only possible when there is mutual faith and trust. So maintain your INTEGRITY.

As you leave here tonight, constantly look for those GUIDEPOSTS, and you will find your opportunities. Draughon's has prepared you with the necessary skills and competencies in your respective field of study. Put these skills and competencies to work for yourself. You will be the one to determine if you will be a SUCCESS or a FAILURE.

In summary, let me say that there is no graduate before me tonight who is exactly alike. There are other graduates who have some parts like you, but no one adds up exactly like you. Therefore, everything that comes from you is authentically yours because you alone chose it. You own everything about you — YOUR BODY, including everything it does; YOUR MIND, including all its thoughts and ideas; YOUR EYES, including the images of all they behold; YOUR FEELINGS, whatever they may be — anger, joy, frustration, love, disappointment, excitement; YOUR MOUTH, and all the words that come out of it — polite, sweet or rough, correct or incorrect; YOUR VOICE, loud or soft; and all your actions, whether they be to others or to yourself. You own YOUR FANTASIES, your dreams, hopes, fears. You own all of YOUR TRIUMPHS and SUCCESSES, FAILURES and MISTAKES. Because you own all of you, you can become intimately acquainted with yourself. By doing so, you can love yourself and be friendly with yourself. You can then make it possible for all of you to work in your best interest. You OWN YOU, and therefore, you can ENGINEER YOURSELF.

Richard Sears, found of the Sears Department Stores, said, "We must let the goods speak for themselves." You are the goods of your own efforts. You are the cream of the crop. You are the envy of many. By your efforts you will survive.

From this day on, you are commissioned. You have a duty! I challenge you. I charge you: Go forth from here tonight, as servants, seeking the opportunities to serve. "He that would be greatest among you, let him be servant of all."

Thank you and good luck.