

University of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University

Let me take this moment to whole heartedly congratulate each and everyone one of you from graduating today, you did it, you've made it and you are all graduating today, give yourself a round of applause. So you did it all by yourself and no body helped. Well that is what I thought when I was still a teenager where the only thing I knew was playing and going to school. Actually when I remember back in those days the only thing my parents requested from me regarding education was for me to pass at school, nothing else. Even though they hardly ever helped me with my homework but they made sure that all the required resources for school were there for me, that everything I requested for school I received. This is because they did not understand what I was studying but they wanted me to have an education. I remember that I had many study guides for every subject from grade 10 to 12 because by then each study guide book cost between R15 at R30. Well as some of us may know that during the 90s we did not have internet, let alone cell phones or tablets or e-education by then but today it should be very easy to acquire such information through the internet. I remember at one point my physics teacher in grade 11, set a two and half hours mid-year physics examination and I finished writing it within 40 minutes; and I had to sit for almost two hours up until everyone was done writing the examination because you were not allowed to leave the examination early. Now do not think that I'm clever and that I'm a genius, no. This was because the teacher unfortunately set the examination using a four year old past West Cape Province final examination paper which I went through on my study guide a night before. So, on the background of this I want to congratulate all the parents, mothers, fathers, as there is no other person in the world who loves you more than the people who gave you life, so

appreciate your parents, especially your mothers who gave birth to you. I want to congratulate all the guardian parents, grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, even NESFAS and everyone who assisted and helped you, to end up graduating today; even those who provided emotional support, even your enemies and those who prayed for you, I congratulate them.

The first point I want to make is that put God first in everything you are you doing. Because in everything you think I have achieved is by the grace of God and it's a gift from above. My uncle who is the oldest brother of my father declined to be a Chief and he joined the calling of being a Catholic Priest. He dedicated his life to the Lord and this has had a positive influence in my life such as being disciplined and sticking to God. I also almost became a Priest but I was just too interested and too queries on how things work or how the world works. I remember when I was a teenage when some of my friends used to call me Umfundisi because of my life style and the fact that I did not smoke or drink, even when they would ask me to taste, I would say no. Even recently I have been asked by my colleagues if I have ever been drunk in my life and the answer has consistently been no and they were surprised and claimed that I had missed out on enjoying life, especially around my early twenties. I understand most of you graduates today are in that age having freedom to do what you like. This to me was actually a very strange response as I have witness over the years the effect of alcohol. I have kept God in my heart and I have been protected and this has kept me humble. I did not always stick with him but he has been always stuck with me, twenty four seven as they would say. So in short stick to God you will be protected just as I have been protected. Do not try things you do not need and things that will not help you in life, be discipline. Involve God the creator of the universe and life as we know it, in

everything you do. As a scientist, I do not believe that life came out of nothing but I believe it was made by a much more powerful being that I do not think we as human have the capability to understand or simulate. For an example no creator can ever create anything that will be smarter than the creator, as it now and then requires human intervention when it malfunctions. So stick to your creator as he knows better what he has planned for you.

The second point I want to make is that do not be afraid to fail and take failing as a learning curve. I remember my first year university life where I did not do well as according to my expectation from school days and I had to repeat first year at university. On my first year I received an advice by than that I must take four half courses and two main courses after they observed my matric certificate and discovered that my subjects contained a lot of C's on a higher grade. Now University was new to me after being at school for 14 years as I had to repeat grade one three times. My parents would inform me that during my first grade one years, I would refuse to go to school and I would just not wake up in the morning; and that I only took half interest in going to school when I was doing my second year grade one, which I also had to repeat. So repeating grade one I do not remember how it felt like surprisingly, the only thing I remember were the games I used to play in the morning and during break times. But repeating first year at university I remember vividly because it was very tough to adjust to University life. I had to take two taxis from home to University to attend lectures from 7:45 in the morning till 1pm with no break, because of the advice that I received during registration. Then I would only have a break for an hour, and at 2pm I would have to attend a practical till 5:30pm, and then I would take two taxis back home and this would happen for the whole 5 days. I remember I had to start using a computer for the first

time at university, something which I have never used and let alone the requirement that I had to start writing programmes to program the computer. So life was very tough, having no person to help you with your tutorials because I stayed at home and also that I was not doing well with my university examinations. Basically life was not easy because I also had to do my responsibilities at home.

The following year I did something out of the ordinary. I registered for the same first year degree courses but now took the hardest mainstream courses instead of half courses, which meant I had fewer lecture classes but more time to understand my work. I remember some of my university friends were surprised at my decision of repeating the same first year degree but with even more harder courses. Probably they were thinking I was setting up myself for failure again, as most of other students would just change degrees. Guess what, I passed all my courses I even obtained a distinction. Even though I still stayed at home, took two taxis to university and back home; did not have anyone to help me with my tutorial and also still had to do my home responsibility. So staying at home taught me how to manage my time effectively and it also taught me to be able to reproduce any results on my homework or tutorial without receiving help from anybody. So I learnt valuable skills when I failed some of my first year courses as I had to embrace it and learn from my mistakes.

The most important thing is that from there on I never look back, up until I was doing my fourth year honours course where I ended up being the sole student in a class. Just me and different lecturers for the whole eight hours of the day, it was tough. I could not be absent from class, could not ask anyone if you did not pick up what the lecture said, could not dream about other matters outside the class, total concentration was required from morning till afternoon for five

days, imagine doing practical on my own. It was even a strange feeling of being the only person writing an examination in an examination room. Guess what I survived. I know most people would have a difficult time accepting being the sole student in a class. But when I look back, it was like having my own personal lecturer. You know when you read stories about the rich and famous that they are able to acquire personal teachers to teach their kids at home. So it was the same with me when I think about it, so I received the best opportunity ever as far as I'm concerned of being personally trained at a public university; and I always thank the university for actually allowing that type of scenario even occur because most university would just cancel the course due to financial reasons.

So in short fail and fail trying to do bigger things and do what you passionate about as life is too short. They usually say go big or go home. So do not be afraid to fail smartly as failure is a learning experience on how to do things correctly. Take professional chances, it's a mean world out there, outside university life as a student I mean, it's an animal farm. Dream big and do not be afraid to fail and remember that dreams have goals. Dreams without goals are just dreams and they ultimately fuel disappointment. So have dreams but also have goals, life goals, daily goals, monthly goals, yearly goals. You have to understand that in order to achieve these goals, just as you have done in ending up having to graduate today is that you must apply discipline and consistency and not just for one day, every day and you have to work on it, daily. You have to plan every day and work hard and smartly and that is what successful people do, they are persistent and they hardly ever give up and they take calculated sacrifices to achieve their goals. So continue to strive and progress as you have done till today.

Remember that you cannot live for ever and that you cannot make a U-turn from the mortuary. There is no elixir of life or immortality potion which when you drink you will be young and live eternal life or eternal youth as many various ancient Chinese emperors discovered. There is no U-turn when you are hauled in the hearse and no matter how much influence you have in the world whether politically, financially or socially or in any other way, you cannot take your influence with you to the grave; and what matters the most it's not how much influence you have, but it's what you do with what you have. We all have different talents; some of you will be doctors, scientist, stock brokers, teachers, business people and politicians. The most selfish thing you can do in this world is help someone else. Why is it selfish, because the gratification, the goodness that comes to you, the good feeling I get from helping someone else, and nothing is better than that, the joy you get from helping others and that is where the success is, in helping others.

Finally I pray that you will take a moment of silent when you leave this place just to give introspective to yourself so as to give thanks to those who form your nuclear family and to those who you might have interacted with and to those who you have seen or not even seen who sacrificed their pleasure time, freedom and lives on different levels for you to be able graduate today.

And while you give introspective also realise that all the good things you desire in your heart are already yours and its God's proof to you in advance that it's already yours. When reach your desire give back and help someone else to also achieve their goals

Importantly do not seek to just to live, seek to make a difference after today.

I thank you.