



April 23, 2020

Dear NDFS Graduate,

Congratulations on the completion of your degree from the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Science! I wish this greeting could be more personal, even if that closeness only lasted the few moments it takes in the Marriott Center to announce your name, watch you walk across the stand, and receive on the other side my brief greeting as I hand you the hardcover for your diploma. It is always a joyful occasion for family members and friends. I hope you, your family, and friends can find meaningful ways under present circumstances to celebrate together and rejoice in your accomplishments.

During this season of celebration, endings, and new beginnings, I encourage you to find private time to reflect thoughtfully on the most powerful lessons you have learned in your time here. Have the aims of a BYU Education been accomplished in your life? How have your time and experiences at BYU combined to be spiritually strengthening, intellectually enlarging, and character building in preparation for lifelong learning and service? How are you different than when you first arrived on campus?

I would like to share three questions with you, the answers to which will shape your life, guide your decisions, and determine your destiny as you move forward.

Question #1 – “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:41–42). This question was directed by Jesus to the Pharisees, but it is equally, even preeminently important for us to “settle this in our hearts” (Luke 21:14). Our answer to this question and the course our answer prompts us to follow will determine our destiny now and through eternity.

Question #2 – “What lack I yet?” (Matthew 19:20). You will recognize this as the question put to Jesus by the rich young man. He was earnest and sincere in his questioning and self-evaluation, but ultimately unwilling to part with his creature comforts. No wonder “he went away sorrowing.” As we ask the same question in private moments, we will come to recognize those areas in our lives that most need our attention and improvement.

Question #3 – “What wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). This was the question Saul (soon to be named Paul) asked the Lord when He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus. If we keep this same question quietly, yet consistently, in our hearts and minds, “it shall be told [us] what [we] must do” (Acts 9:6). Specific answers will come, giving direction in managing and balancing the demands of family, careers, church service, and all other aspects of our lives.

I rejoice with you in your accomplishments. I am excited to see the good you can and will do, not only in your professional pursuits but in other endeavors that require the skills you have developed and the kind of person you have become. I invite and encourage you to become an active alumnus, keeping in contact, as your time permits, with professors, updating us on significant happenings in your life. I wish you success in all your future endeavors.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Merrill J. Christensen". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Merrill J. Christensen, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Science