



Making the Grade

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I was wasting my time and, worse, my parents' money. Something had to change.

Fear. That pretty much sums up what I felt as I shuffled my feet and tried to avoid the soul-searching gazes of my parents. They weren't going to like what I had to tell them at all.

I had just returned home for Thanksgiving from my first semester of college. I was telling my parents about my college experiences and new friends. But what started as an enjoyable conversation quickly turned uncomfortable when my mom casually asked the question I had been dreading: "So, how are your grades?"

Frantically, my mind began to dig for lame excuses that might help me out of the mess I was in. How had I let my grades slip so far? I had arrived at college with every intention of studying hard and doing well. But then I discovered that for the first time in my life, no one was looking over my shoulder telling me what to do. Parents that were 400 miles away meant no curfew, no chores, and no rules. I took advantage of this newfound freedom and was quickly in the habit of staying up late at night with my roommates. My life was filled with late-night movies, late-night trips to get ice cream, and late-night talks and games with roommates.

After this late-night fun, I was in no mood to wake up for early-morning classes. When

my alarm blared at 6:30 a.m., I would hit the trusty snooze button and burrow deeper under the covers. I missed class a lot, but what did it matter—college teachers didn't take roll anyway.

All of this explained why I was now sitting in front of my parents, shuffling my feet and afraid to meet their gaze. Instead of asking for forgiveness like I should have, I chose to get angry. I looked my parents in the eyes and said defiantly: "My grades aren't good right now. But I think it's unfair of both of you to expect me to spend all of my time at college studying. Are you trying to keep me from having fun?"

My mom looked at me and said, "It was really hard for us when you left home, but we let you go because we knew you needed an education. It's good to have fun, but you have to remember you are at college for a specific purpose. We have sacrificed a lot so that you can have this experience."



“Sacrifices? What sacrifices have they given up so I can go to college?” I wondered. And then I remembered. They had agreed to pay half of my tuition. Checks from my mom always arrived in the nick of time to help me meet my monthly rent payment. They were willing to let me leave and go to a strange new place because they knew I would learn from it.

As I listed the sacrifices in my mind one by one, it suddenly hit me—I *had* been selfish. Not once as I stayed out late or skipped class had I thought about what my parents had given up. I had forgotten what was important, and I was wasting their sacrifice because I wasn’t making the most of my education.

For the first time, I realized just what they had done for me, and I knew I could only make the most of the things they had given up for me by working hard in school.

It wasn’t until later that day that I heard it: a still, small voice in my mind that asked a simple question, “Are you discarding the

THE ABUNDANT LIFE

“Youth is the training period when busy hands learn to labor—and labor to learn. Honest effort and loving service become identifying features of the abundant life.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Hands,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1990, 2.

sacrifice that your Heavenly Father made in allowing His Son to suffer and die to atone for your sins, just as you have been discarding the sacrifice of your earthly parents?”

Suddenly, I remembered all of the days when I had forgotten my purpose on earth. The days when I fell into bed, too tired to say my prayers, and the mornings when I didn’t read my scriptures because I thought it was more important to look nice for school.

It dawned on me that I wasn’t living on earth just to entertain myself. I was here as part of Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness. The Savior’s sacrifice—the Atonement—was made so that you and I, and all of God’s children, could learn the lessons of earth life. Because of that sacrifice, we have the opportunity to repent and return to live with Heavenly Father again. I want to be able to say that I used my time on earth to learn and grow as He intended. **NE**