



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY  
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***“BECOME PEOPLE OF VALUE - SERVE!”***

**St. George’s University Commencement 2018  
12 May 2018**

**Salutations:**

Chancellor Modica (in absentia)

Dr. Richard Olds, President

Dr. Callum Macpherson, Vice Provost and Dean

Esteemed Members of the Dais

Ministers of Government

Baroness Howells

Faculty

Family members and friends

Graduating Class of 2018

**Introduction**

I consider it an honour to have been invited by St. George’s University to deliver this year’s commencement address and I thank the University for this kind invitation. Needless to say, I am thrilled, to be at home.

Graduands, let’s be honest.

How many of you wondered if you would finish?

You had your fears. You had your cares. Perhaps, some of you even shed some tears.

What if I fail? How will I effectively balance family, work and study?

Yet, you overcame. You prevailed. You did it.

Savour this moment. Remember it, the next time you feel doubtful or despondent about a challenge with which you are confronted.

No doubt you worked hard, and you deserve much credit. But truth be told, many of you would readily acknowledge that you could not reach this milestone without help. A lot of help – from family, faculty, friends, peers and some instances, employers. For those of you who are people of faith, you would readily agree but for God, you simply would not be here today.



Graduands, I now invite you stand to acknowledge and applaud the people who helped you along the way.

I am especially grateful to all our mothers including my mother and my wife, both of whom are here. As tomorrow is Mother's Day, please allow me to express Happy Mother's Day to all mothers in the house.

### ***St. George's University – An Iconic Grenadian Institution***

As the premier offshore medical school in the world, St. George's University delivers world class education and has a well-earned global reputation. For me and indeed many Grenadians, home and abroad, this University is a source of considerable pride. When I speak of Grenada in the USA, I often point to the fact that this University has trained one in every 100 doctors in the USA – what an amazing contribution! In speaking to Chancellor Modica, a few days ago, I understand that number is now almost 1 in 50 doctors in the USA and in the New York and New Jersey area, that number is 1 in 25.

While it would be improper to say that SGU has placed Grenada on the map, I think we can all agree that it is certainly helping to locate Grenada on the map. The University can boast of its amazing diversity with a student body of almost 8,000 drawn from 101 countries around the world. Furthermore, the University's consistently high performance on the American Boards is a standout.

Beyond SGU's quality and diversity, I also hail its resiliency. Of course, the issue of building resilience is top of mind for our region in the aftermath of last year's hurricane season.

Following the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-08, the Caribbean experienced the Great Recession from 2009 to 2012. Indeed, this was a brutal period for our economies. In 2010, mindful of SGU's significance to the Grenadian economy, I recommended to the Minister of Finance that we invite the Chancellor for a discussion on the prospects for SGU. Chancellor Modica readily accepted the invitation. On arrival at our offices, he thanked us for the invitation to have such a dialogue. The Minister then asked the Chancellor, what are the prospects for SGU at this time? The Chancellor replied: Minister, I appreciate the question. To be sure, some of our potential applicants are adversely impacted. But he went on to say: I am not worried, because for every seat in our medical programme, we have 6.5 applications. We will be just fine. That was a revelation.



Needless to say, the Minister and I were relieved and the Chancellor was right. During the Great Recession, SGU grew and demonstrated its resilience. Today, SGU accounts for nearly 20 per cent of the Grenadian economy. Consequently, it is in our mutual interest (all of us) to protect and promote this iconic Grenadian institution. And we must continually pay tribute to Chancellor Modica for his vision and tenacity.

### ***My Dream for World Class Health Services in Grenada***

The mantra of SGU is: “*Think Beyond*”. So thinking beyond, I dream of a day when Grenada will not only offer world class medical education, as SGU currently does, but world class health services, and that those services will be accessible to all Grenadians as well as residents and tourists. Forty-one years after the inception of SGU, this next frontier of medical tourism must now be pursued. It will take a public-private partnership inclusive of Government, SGU and a major hospital in the USA among others. It will be good for the health of our citizens, the health of the Grenadian economy and the health of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union. I urge all to help make this dream a reality in the shortest possible time, and I stand ready to help.

### ***A Challenge to the Graduands – Become People of Value***

And now I wish to challenge the graduands.

A few months before his death in 1955, Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of all time, delivered this remarkable exhortation to a young man:

“Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value”. He is considered successful in our day, if he gets more out of life than he puts in. However, a man of value will give more than he receives”.

In short, Einstein redefined success not as fame, fortune and power, as offered by conventional wisdom but as service to humanity.

More than 60 years later, Larry Fink, CEO of Blackrock, one of the largest hedge funds in the world had this to say in his 2018 Annual Letter to CEOs and I quote: “Society is demanding that companies, both public and private, serve a social purpose. “To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society”. End of quote.



In his book, *Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success*, Adam Grant, Wharton professor, identifies three types of people: takers, matchers and givers. Takers strive to get as much as possible from others; matchers strive to get as much as they give; and givers strive to contribute as much as possible without expecting anything in return.

Question: Which type are you?

Could I see the hands of all the takers?

In Grant's research, he found givers were generally more successful, derived more life satisfaction and were considered more valuable than their peers. Graduands, I charge you today: strive to become people of value. So how do you become a person of value? Permit me to offer you three suggestions:

## *1. Focus on Service*

About 12 years ago, I was at The World Bank and having lunch with a senior officer, she asked, where do see yourself in five years? I paused briefly before replying: "Back in the Caribbean helping to find solutions to our problems." She looked at me and I sensed she was not overly impressed. I guessed she may have been looking for something more definitive. Perhaps a role, even a title. It appeared then that I lacked ambition. But truth be told, then, as it is now, all I ever wanted to do was serve. Twelve years later than remains my ambition and my passion - to serve my country and my region. How did service become such a passion for me? It started with my life values. My top life values are: faith, family and service. So, what are your top life values? If you do not know what they are, you cannot live them.

Reflect. Resolve. Live. Focus on service. Max out your humanity. Recall the words of Martin Luther King Jr: "Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve".

Before I move on, let me give you a heads up. Expect criticism. And not all criticism is bad. I have a very simple approach to criticism. Truth or trash? If it is truth, tough as it may be, I embrace it and get better. If it is trash, I dump it and move on. But sometimes, criticism gets a bit tricky. Sometimes, the criticism is a mixture of lies, innuendoes and a grain of truth. Resist the temptation to discard everything. The trick or skill is to extract the kernel of truth and discard what remains.



## **2. *Develop a Flexible Skillset***

At the World Economic Forum in Davos this year, Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister declared: and I quote: “The pace of change has never been this fast, yet it will never be this slow again”. End of quote. In *Financial Times Book of the Year: The Future of the Professions*, the book (page 114) asserts and I quote:

“The working environment for professionals is in flux. For today’s practitioners, to thrive they will need to be willing to take on new skills and competencies. In particular, they will need to learn to communicate differently, to gain mastery of the data in their disciplines, to establish new working relationships with their machines, to diversify. More generally, there is a catch-all capability that tomorrow’s professionals will need to embrace – that is being flexible”.

American writer and futurist, Alvin Toffler cautions and I quote: “The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, relearn and unlearn”. End of quote.

In Deloitte’s *Global Human Capital Trends 2017*, it observes, and I quote: “In the past employees learned to gain skills for a career; now the career itself is a journey of learning.” End of quote.

Against these findings, you must keep learning. Take responsibility for your skilling and reskilling. May you stay forever skilled. Indeed, you cannot lead if you do not read. Continually.

## **3. *Face Your Fears***

We all have our fears. You have yours. I have mine.

The story is told of a spy who had been captured and sentenced to death by a general of the Persian army. As was the custom, the general offered the condemned spy a choice. He could either face the firing squad or pass through the black door. The general asked: "Which shall it be - the firing squad or the black door?" That was not an easy question, and the prisoner hesitated, but soon he made it known that he preferred the firing squad. Not long thereafter, a volley of shots in the courtyard announced the grim sentence had been executed.



The general stood silent and reflective. An aide who stood near him was curious and asked: "What lies behind the black door"? The general replied: "Freedom." He continued, "You see how it is with people; they always prefer the known to the unknown. And yet I gave him a choice. In all my years, few people have been brave enough to take the black door."

What would you do if you were not afraid? How many doors to freedom and value have we passed up during our lives because we chose to cling to the familiar? Francis Chan, educator and author, is right: "Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter."

Does anyone know what is the second most commonly expressed emotion in daily life? It is regret. Regret is unique because it is not just that I wish things had turned out differently, it is because I believe things could have turned out differently if I had made different decisions. Very often, it is about missed opportunities. Do not aim low. For example, why settle for simply making money when you can make a difference. If do not understand the difference, just ask Bill Gates or Warren Buffet.

Graduands, face your fears and press forward with courage.

## **Conclusion**

It has been my delight to deliver this commencement address. Class of 2018, I again offer you, hearty congratulations. Remember:

- Focus on Service
- Develop a Flexible Skillset
- Face Your Fears

And now I charge you, go and become people of value:

If you learn, teach.

If you get, give.

Each one, touch one.

May God guide you and bless you on your journey to make a difference and help change our region and our world.



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