

Senior Last Lecture
Miami University
2006
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Thanks and congratulations to you graduating seniors. I am so honored to have been asked to speak at your Senior Last Lecture. When Ray Mock asked me to speak, I didn't know how big of a deal this was. I thought it would be an informal meeting with just a few in attendance. I hope I am up for the occasion.

I want to start by recognizing that we are in the presence of greatness as we join together this evening. Dr. Shriver is an institution at Miami University. The fact that he is with us today means a great deal to me. In fact, when I entered as a freshman in 1965, it was Dr. Shriver's first year as President – we were “freshmen” together. I also want to share a story about Dr. Garland who is retiring after ten great years of serving Miami. Dr. Garland and Carole have given a great deal to Miami in these ten years and we are the better for it. I also want to let you know of a moment when Dr. Garland did something that I will never forget. It was 1998 and it was the Miami game against Western Michigan University. Prior to 1998, I had already experienced some difficulty with my heart. On a visit to the doctor, I came to find that three of my arteries were partially blocked – one with 97%, another with 77%, and the third with 53% blockage. I was only 43 at the time and had to undergo triple bypass surgery. When I collapsed on the basketball court in 1998, after only a few minutes of the game, the last thing I remembered when I woke up the next day was the score just before I fell to the floor.

When I woke up, I can hardly tell you how good it felt, except there was one slightly disturbing thing that happened in the weeks to come. After my recovery from my heart surgery, I went back to church and there was a lady there who testified in church that first Sunday. She talked about her heart attack and subsequent heart surgery – just like mine. She said that during the time she was unconscious, she saw signs of heaven and peacefulness. I began to think about this... When I passed out, I didn't see anything. It was completely black! That morning I knew I needed to get my life together, you know what I mean?

The good thing about the heart attack was what I found out about the team. Everyone was in shock. As they took me away, Wally Szerbiak pulled the team into a huddle immediately after I was taken off the floor and lead the team back into the game. Wally showed what he was made of and the team stepped up to finish the game

I'm here today to tell you that I got back in the game as well. One of the most important things during my recovery was when the paper asked President Garland what he was going to do about a basketball coach. President Garland simply responded, “Charlie is our coach.” This made it clear to me that it was my decision and it allowed me to return again to do the thing I love most – coaching basketball.

As I begin to talk to you about leadership with values, I would like to share with you a story about my mother, myself, and college. I think it was during my sophomore year when I happened to be home on break. My mother had noticed a change in my attitude (for the worse) and she wasn't pleased with my higher education swagger. After observing me for a couple of days, she reminded me about one of her cousins who "knew everything." She also told me about how other family members began to feel uncomfortable in his presence. After telling me those things, she challenged me to make a difference with my college experience. The point was that there's nothing about getting a college degree that makes you any better than others – it's what you do as you work toward the degree and what you do with it afterwards.

My remarks tonight are focused on leadership with values, a topic that is so much a part of Miami as an institution. What can I say about the importance of values to those who seek to lead others?

My daughter, Mary, is my greatest inspiration. She and I talk every day and she always inspires me to greater heights. One of my favorite inspirations was a quote that I have on my bulletin board; I read it every day.

- **Good leaders have a strong sense of family.** Whatever you do, always keep things going with those you love.
- **Good leaders care about others.** People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
- **Good leaders set good examples.** I don't know if you've heard about the lion and the gazelle. Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or gazelle: when the sun comes up, you'd better be running.
- **Good leaders are not afraid of obstacles.** Henry Ford once said that "obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal." In a way related to Mr. Ford's advice, I took an oath a number of years ago. It goes like this, "Good leaders are not afraid of a challenge. I am an educator and motivator. I hereby give up my right to complain, base my life on what is not working, feel overly sorry for myself, indulge in a rich tapestry of excuses—instead, I commit myself from this day forth to the active pursuit of what is working. When problems occur, I don't go into denial about it, but use them as springboards for becoming more resourceful. I can afford no more than 10 minutes per day for whining. Any more than that is costing me my dreams."

These words, and the values that are part of them, guide me to pay attention to the right things every day. These are the values that guide my leadership.

I have one parting story to share with you tonight. This place, standing here between Stoddard and Elliott at the HUB of campus is a very important spot for me. It is a place

where I come when I am a bit anxious about an upcoming game. On these days, I make it a point to drive through this part of campus. When I pass the spot near the Hub, where the first football game was played on Miami's campus, I sometimes shed a tear. As I pass through the heart of campus, I know I'm OK, connected, energized, and ready to face the day. Coming through academic quad reminds me of the beauty of this place and the reason I'm here – the reason we're all here. It's for you, the students! I need to be reminded and it makes an immense difference in my life and work.

Good luck and God bless all of you!