

# A MORALLY SATISFYING LIFE

Remarks for the Honor Convocation  
August 22, 2019

Good evening to you all, and, again, welcome to Hampden-Sydney College.

When we set goals, we give ourselves expectations that we are going to work toward and try to live up to. If we are successful at achieving our goals, those expectations go from being something external or outside of ourselves—or something that we impose on ourselves—to a way of life. The expectations are no longer something we are working to achieve, but something we are living into every day.

Tonight, we ask you to sign our Honor Code and formally join the brotherhood of Hampden-Sydney men. Our Honor Code states that “A Hampden-Sydney student will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do.” These are the expectations of Hampden-Sydney men, but we don’t want these expectations to be a sort of daily checklist of whether you upheld the honor code today. What we want is for these expectations to become a way of life for you, something that you live into every day.

Our alumni will be happy to share with you that living with the Honor Code as a student has been one of the most important influences on how they live their lives after graduating, affecting everything, including their work, their friendships, their marriages, how they parent, and how they live in their communities.

During my first year as president, an alumnus told me a story that underscores the impact of our Honor Code. He told me that he was trying to complete a big real estate transaction. The deal was complex, and it gave both parties opportunities to try to take advantage of the other party. So, he was anxious going into the negotiations, but when he arrived at the meeting, he learned that the other side was represented by an attorney who was a Hampden-Sydney graduate. At that moment, all of the tension evaporated because both sides now knew that neither side would be trying to take advantage of the other. Over the last couple of years, I have heard many variations of that story from other alumni.

The main point I want to make is that we want the high expectations of the Honor Code to quickly become a way of life for you and a big part of the man you want to be. For some of you, this transition from expectations to a way of life will be easier and for some of you harder. After tonight you are brothers, so rely on each other to help with this transition.

I will also make a prediction. You will like this way of life. By now, you’ve been in situations yourself or you’ve seen your friends in situations where the easy or expedient thing to do is not the right thing to do. By now, you already know that short cuts on the road of life are usually dead ends. One of Jordan Peterson’s *12 Rules for Life* is “Tell the Truth, or at Least Don’t Lie.” And, Peterson goes on to note that lying or not telling the truth leaves us incomplete and undeveloped. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we are not only lying, cheating, or stealing from others, but we are reducing ourselves, minimizing ourselves, limiting ourselves. This, of course, is the opposite of what we want

from these next four years. Early on during my time here, a student told me that one of the best things about his experience at Hampden-Sydney is that it had made him want to stop taking shortcuts. He went on to say that not taking shortcuts meant much more work, much more training, much more time in the gym, much more discipline, but that he liked the man he had become. He added that he found his life “morally satisfying.”

So sign your name tonight and begin authoring your own story of morally satisfying Hampden-Sydney brotherhood.