

## Truth For Graduates And Other Living Creatures

We are honoring our graduates today, both high school and college. We are proud of each of you as you have attained this special milestone in your academic careers.

As I prepared for this service, I began to write down some Biblical truths, some life truths that I felt were important for graduates, but not just for graduates. I believe all of us need to hear and to live by the simple truths I am going to share with you today.

**1. You were created on purpose with a purpose.** You are no accident. You were not simply the product or consequence of a series of biological events. You are the incredible, amazing creation of an incredible, awesome, eternal, invincible, immortal, omnipotent God. Out of the billions of people now inhabiting the planet and including all of those who once inhabited this planet, you are totally unique, created as part of the eternal purpose and plan of God.

The bible says, **“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Psalm 139:13-16**

Consider how your body functions – the ability of your mind to think, to reason – the ability of your body to act and react, to work in harmony with your mind. Consider that out of all the possible combinations - and there were trillions of them - God ordained that you would be you, with all of your gifts, talents, skill, abilities, likes and dislikes. You were fearfully and wonderfully made.

And verse 16 of the passage we just read says he has ordained days for us and written about us in his book. We are talking about purpose here. God designed and created us with a unique purpose. Each of us has a reason for being.

The bible says, **“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10.** You are God’s workmanship. He uniquely designed you so you could carry out your assignment and do the good works he has for you to do.

I don’t know what all of those good works are. You may not know either. But everyday as you honor Christ, reject sin and obey God’s word, you will discover ways to

fulfill God's purpose for your life. If you don't obey God and his word, if you don't discover and live out God's purpose for your life, the potential exists for misuse and abuse. God created you for something better and greater and higher and more noble than what many people settle for. Live out God's purpose for your life everyday. Don't live to please yourself, live to please Christ. As you do you will find your purpose.

**2. Your life is too valuable to waste!** You see it was no small thing, this redemption and salvation that has been provided for us. It required the offering of a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. The highest price that could be paid was paid to purchase you out of your life of sin and death. The price was the life of God's own Son.

The bible says, **“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” 1 Peter 1:18-19**

Let me ask you: What are you worth? From where does your value come? Your value is found here in the sacrifice of Christ. Not in your IQ, your physical or athletic ability, your looks or talent, but in the value God placed upon you when he sent his Son to die in your place.

Value can be determined by what went in to creating something. This building is worth millions of dollars because that is what we spent to build it. We are worth about \$2-\$3 dollars because that's the value of the chemicals and minerals that make up the human body.

But value is also determined by what someone is willing to give or to pay for something. Van Gogh maybe had \$25 invested in paint and canvas in his “Sunflowers”, but someone was willing to pay \$25 million for it a few years ago.

Your value has been determined by what someone was willing to pay for your life and your eternal soul. God paid with the life and blood of his Son. You are worth more than we could estimate or imagine. Don't waste what God has placed such value upon. Don't cheapen your value and worth through sin and rebellion against the God who created you, loved you and gave everything to redeem you and save you.

The bible tells us that God has saved us and made us alive in Christ, through his sacrifice. He then writes, **“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not**

**to the sinful nature to live according to it.” Romans 8:12.** We have an obligation to live a life that is pleasing to Christ. We owe him everything. Don't waste your life with sinful choices and behavior. Don't waste the life that God has redeemed with stupid rebellion against his purpose. Surrender your life to Christ and live for him. You are obligated to serve him and live for him. You owe him everything. He died for you, in your place. Your life is too valuable to waste.

**3. Don't let trouble trouble you.** You need to know that in this life there will be trouble. At the end of that section we just read from Romans 8, there is this wonderful assurance that reads, **“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” Romans 8:16-17**

We are always happy to declare that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, but we never finish the verse that mentions about sharing in his sufferings. Life has trouble. Jesus said everyday had its share of evil and trouble. Jesus said, **“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33.** You are going to have trouble of some kind in your life. That word translated as trouble can mean pressure, anguish, burdens, persecution, tribulation. You won't live a trouble free, unchallenged life. It doesn't matter who told you otherwise. It's not what the bible says. In this world you are going to have trouble. It isn't always a sign of sin, failure or error. Trouble comes and we think, “What did I do to deserve this?” Maybe nothing. Maybe something. Maybe it is the result of our ignorance or negligence. Maybe it is an attack of the enemy, or maybe it's just part of living on a sin-cursed planet that still groans under the weight of sin and rebellion.

Bear this in mind, the bible warns us that in the last days, in the closing hours of time, there will be great tribulation. Many believe that things are rapidly shaping up in the world to usher in the Great Tribulation. It is going to get more difficult to be a Christian in America. The cost of being a Christian is about to rise exponentially. Get ready for it. But don't despair when trouble comes. Don't give up when trouble comes. Don't let trouble trouble you. Instead, listen to what Jesus said.

Jesus said, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in**

me.” **John 14:1** In the passage from John 16 he said, **“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.” John 16:33.**

I don't want you to abandon your faith when trouble comes. “I thought if I served God I wouldn't have trouble. I've tried to be faithful all my life and now we see trouble and persecution.” Trouble is in this world. It's embedded here. Days will get darker and spiritual and political persecution will grow more intense. But don't let trouble overwhelm you. **“Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27** Trust in God. He is the one who provides for us and cares for us. We will have to learn to trust him even more in the coming days. There will be no one else upon whom we can lean. Lean on Jesus. “Trust in God and trust also in me” Jesus said. Jesus has overcome the world and he will help you overcome in the days of trouble. Don't give in to fear. There are a lot of frightening things in the world, but none of those things can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Remain steadfast in your trust in the Lord and don't be afraid. Don't be troubled by trouble. Don't be afraid Jesus said. That brings us to the next truth:

**4. Fear is a lousy companion for any age or season of life.** So is guilt, shame, regret, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, rejection, jealousy, lust, greed. We all take some traveling companions with us on the journey of our lives. We meet them over a lifetime and we determine whether they will travel with us on the journey or not. The bible describes some of these as the “acts of the sinful nature.” All of these things produce pain in our lives and they separate us from God. The bible says that if we live like this, allowing sinful things like bitterness, immorality, rage, jealousy, envy, drunkenness, discord, and hatred to remain in us, refusing to deal with and reject them, then “those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:21.

You will have to decide what goes and what stays. You have to decide whether the “acts of the sinful nature”, whether the sins you've given into, whether those will stay with you on the journey of your life and eventually eternally separate you from God, or whether you will reject those things and embrace the life of Christ and His Holy Spirit.

The bible describes that life that is pleasing to Christ as one that is surrendered to him and bearing the evidence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The bible says, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

**gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:22-25**

We crucify the acts and choices of a sinful nature. We say no to jealousy, lust, greed, hatred, resentment, bitterness and all of those other things. We will not have them as companions on our journey. Instead, we embrace the life of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit. We pray, “Come Jesus and fill us with your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Keep us walking in step with You, always devoted to you and eager to please you in every decision and every choice we make. Lord we don’t want to have an ugly, bitter, resentful, ungrateful spirit accompanying us on the journey of our life. Instead, let us walk with you, Jesus and let Your Holy Spirit fill our lives with that good fruit that blesses others.” That’s the companion I want for the journey of my life.

Let me just say it again. You are living your life and gathering up all kinds of people and friends and memories and consequences and joys and accomplishments and regrets and you will live with them for the rest of your life and perhaps the rest of eternity. Be careful. Make your life and your choices count. Where ever you are in the ages and seasons of your life, be careful who and what you take with you on the journey of life.

**5. Life was never meant to be all about you!** I know that’s hard for some of us to accept because from the day we were born it seems like it’s been all about us. We’ve lived our lives that way. Spoiled. Selfish. Self-centered. It’s about me...me...me! Don’t be offended, it’s simply the truth. That’s how we approach life. But remember I told you the bible says we are his workmanship. He created us. The bible tells us that Jesus created all things and “**...all things were created by him and for him.” Colossians 1:16.** You weren’t created in order to please yourself. You were created by Jesus for Jesus. You were created in order to live for him, to love him, serve him, please him, satisfy him and his desires. It’s not about you being satisfied, it’s about whether Jesus is pleased and satisfied. It’s not about making it easy on yourself, it’s about living a life of devotion and surrender to Christ. Understanding this

will make a difference in the choices you make and the path you take in life.

Your life is to be all about Jesus, loving him and serving him and he also told us it is to be about loving and serving others. The bible says we are to **“...obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.” 1 John 3:22-23.** Life is meant to be about Jesus and about others and not all about ourselves. It is the means to a successful life.

**6. Make sure you know the real meaning of success.** Success can mean different things for different people. Jesus told us not to worry about all the stuff, the possessions and trappings of life, those things that many people associate with success in life. Instead he said, **“...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33**

The apostle Paul warns us about loving money and those trappings of success. He says, **“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” 1 Timothy 6:10.**

We can get blinded by money, thinking we will be happy and successful if we just have a little more. But the bible also tells us, **“...godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it.” 1 Timothy 6:6.** We must learn the meaning of a successful life and what really brings contentment.

I read a story this week about a man asking another about how he would describe success. He mentioned money, cars, houses, fame, wealth, land. Then he asked him how he would describe a successful life. His answer was different – a loving wife and children, friends, people to love and to love you, serving God, living a life of faithfulness and leaving a legacy that others can embrace and follow. Those are the things that make a successful life. There is a difference.

The newspapers have been full of articles recently about men and women of power and influence, successes in business and finance, but they didn't have very successful lives. Corrupt, greedy, and now they find themselves in trouble. They didn't know the difference between success and a successful life.

You've read the articles about Waymon Tisdale the last couple of days. So many people have said, "He was a great ball player and jazz musician, but more importantly he was a great person." Make sure you know the difference between success and a successful life. Sounds like Waymon knew the difference. It can make all the difference in the world.

**7. Make sure you live all of your life with eternity in view.** I thought as I was writing this sermon, "I wonder how many times I've made this point in a sermon?" Hundreds and hundreds of times I suppose. Live your life with eternity in view.

It's simple really. Don Casey used to call it his elevator sermon. What do you preach to someone in a few seconds? Life is short. Eternity is long. Are you ready?

It is simple. You see, this world, this existence, this life – this isn't all there is. And we weren't created for this life and this world alone. We were created for eternity.

This life, the time we spend here is like a pencil point on a piece of paper viewed from a billion miles in space. It is minuscule compared to eternity. And yet we get so focused on this life, this world, this time and we ignore the reality of heaven and hell. We often live as if there is no God, no devil, no heaven, no hell. We can't afford to ignore the reality of eternity. Not for a day, not for an hour, not for a moment. It's too important. Everything is at stake.

Don't ever lose sight of heaven and eternity. Don't let life, its passions and pleasures or its challenges and struggles, its victories and successes or its losses and defeats – don't let any of it cause you to lose sight of heaven and eternity and the importance of serving God and pleasing him above all else. Nothing else matters. In the final analysis, living a life for Jesus is the only life that counts.

The bible asks us, in light of the truths of the gospel, in light of the fact that eternity is ahead and that all of us will spend eternity in either heaven or hell, Peter's letter asks, "**...what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God...**" **2 Peter 3:11.**

The apostle Paul said, "**Be very careful then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.**" **Ephesians 5:15-17** Be careful how you live your life! Live it for Jesus. Be faithful and serve him.

It will matter for all eternity!

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Make sure you know the real meaning of success.

Make sure you live all of your life with eternity in view.