

LIFE'S GREATEST CHOICES

PROVERBS 3:5-6

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Introduction

Welcome 2015 high school grads. Graduation is such an exciting time. It's the time that you looked forward to for years. How many times have you said, "I can't wait until I graduate because then I will be able to ..." Guess what? That time is now! It's taken you 18 years to get here which means - You have been in school for over 2,000 days!

It must seem like an eternity from those first days as a freshman to where you are today. You have faced big challenges. And, I can tell you, making it through life will include continuous challenges that you must meet. But the wonderful thing about confronting challenges is that you already have some victories already under your belt.

We are here this morning to rejoice with these young men and women who are seated among us. They are about to make a major transition in their lives. Do you remember your graduation from high school? You had plans and dreams. Now they have plans and dreams. We are here to celebrate closing this chapter and the beginning of the rest of your life.

Lao Tzu wrote, "The journey of a thousand miles begins beneath one's feet." With each step of your journey, I hope you will allow the bible to be a big part as a roadmap on how to reach your goals.

My life verse seems appropriate on this day:

Thy Word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. Psalms 119:105

How does one learn from their journey? Most of us will take videos or pictures during our journey of life. Facebook is full of them. It is a way of remembering and keeping them fresh. Although, some events we never publish as we are ashamed or sorrowful about the decisions we have made.

Many times the challenges in our lives are the result of good or poor decisions we have made. Each day of our lives are filled with challenges and decisions.

Earlier, Kaytee, Ravin and Colton read three passages of scripture and I would like to touch on each of them.

I would like to reveal some lessons that I have learned from my journey. I am sure that this list isn't exclusive, nor is it all encompassing. As I look back over my life, these are the way-points that have made the biggest impact on my journey.

LEARN FROM LIFE.

In the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, the writer was instructing his sons on an important life lesson – throughout their lives they will be a time for everything.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. 9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? 10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. 11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), in his poem; “The Rainy Day”, the third verse says:

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary. 15

Jesus was teaching the multitudes on the mountain and said:

Matthew 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Paul the writer of much of the New Testament said it best when he wrote;

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

In the New Testament book, James writes:

James 4:13-15 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

As you travel through life, I encourage you to savor each and every experience. Throughout your lives you will experience the “good, the bad and the ugly” to borrow a line from a western film. I would encourage you to learn from all your experiences, the good and the bad. Learn and grow from them. Don’t fight change, but embrace it. To every season...

In learning from Life, there are:

THREE CHOICES YOU WILL BE FACED WITH

The choice of companions

As I look back on my life, I find that friends and acquaintances come and go. But, few things in life are more important and powerful than our friends.

My mother hammered an old adage into my brain that goes, “You will be known by the company your keep.” And she was right. I have had my share of great and not so great friends. Some friends inspired me while others drug me down. Association, is perception. What people perceive is reality to them.

This well-known saying is a short and weak version of Solomon’s true warning:

Proverbs 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Though you may be wise, foolish friends will eventually bring you to destruction. Though you may be foolish, wise friends will show and teach you success.

Simply stated then, this is a simple rule for success and joy in your life; get rid of foolish, and choose the wise for friends. You will grow in wisdom and avoid a lot of trouble in life.

The Bible declares,

1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Who you select as friends goes a long way in determining where you go in life.

The apostle Paul says, “Bad companions ruin good character.” (1 Cor. 15) It is friends who encourage you to drive 100 MPH; to take your first cigarette, that first beer or joint or drug. Few have the power to go against the crowd, so it is imperative that you choose the right crowd.

But bad friends, like fish, will begin to stink and if you are around them long enough, you will begin to carry their smell upon you. Remember, your success and joy is hanging in the balance. “Choose wisely.”

The choice of a husband or wife.

The choice of a husband or wife is one of the most important and critical decisions you will make. Unfortunately, many choose their life companion with no more thought than the way they would choose buying their next car. If you want heaven on earth, marry the right person. The opposite is also true, there is nothing so miserable than making the wrong decision here. I wish I had some magic formula to help you in this process but there isn't one.

When our children were small we introduced them to deciding what they really wanted in a future husband or wife. My daughter wrote down all the important areas that she wanted in a husband. As each new suitor would come into her life, she compared them to her list. It was hard to break up when the person didn't meet the criteria, but she has found joy and happiness and has been married over twenty years.

Her list included these requirements.

Marry a Christian

Marry someone with like beliefs

Is he good to her at all times

Is he good to his mom / others

Is he serving the Lord

Do my parents approve

They must have the same moral standards

I would encourage, no I implore you to begin making a list of the “requirements” you are seeking in a husband or wife. Then hold firm your priorities.

LEARN WHAT HAS REAL VALUE.

Life will present many things in your life. Some are of great value, and others have little value. A great piece of advice I received was that some decisions require very little thought; what do I wear today. What do I want to eat for lunch. Those are important at that moment, but in three months, not very. Make decisions based on the how those decisions will matter in 1 day, 1 week, 1 month, three years, 10 years and more. The longer the result of the decision, the longer you should spend on making that decision.

Formal education

A vocation

Automobile

Housing

Life mate

Good Character - Honesty, integrity and faithfulness are qualities that show through your character. In fact they are your character.

LEARN WHO GOD IS.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

I want to read Romans 8:28

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Did you notice that God is mentioned two times in this verse? The first time He is mentioned the verse speaks about our relationship with Him. He is able to cause all things to work together for our good if we love Him. God has created us to have a relationship with other people but He has also created us to have a relationship with Him and if I have a relationship with Him – He is able to cause all things to work together for your good.

What this tells me is that there are situations or circumstances that will come my way, that I may not like, but if I have a relationship with God, I can gain from that experience. I may feel down and discouraged, I may be disappointed and devastated, I may feel dumped on or deserted - but if I have a

relationship with Him I can know with certainty that He can cause all things to work together for my good.

Because of the relationship that I have with God, I can live a life of hope – because I know that God is on my side. We all face trials and triumphs through life – because that is life is made of. But having a relationship with God can make all the difference in the world as to how well we handle it. I wish that your cup will be overflowing with triumphs - but first and foremost I wish you would build a relationship with God – for *“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

Learn from life

Learn what has real value

Learn who God is.

Learning these three things and making the right choices will aid you in your journey through life.

Let Us Pray.

Conclusion

Bob Crowder