

Message to Our Seniors

Today we want to congratulate our high school graduates. It's been a pleasure over the years to watch you go from an adolescent into a young adult. Now you are about to embark into a new chapter in your book of life, we wish you the best. This transition in your lives will bring about much change. For one, you will likely be moving away from home and the influence of parents. This will mean you have more freedom to make your own decisions but with this freedom there will also be more responsibility. Many graduates make foolish and careless decisions soon after graduation and have to live with the consequences for years to come.

Another change will be a new circle of friends. Right now, you have close high-school buddies that you consider as your best friends. But generally speaking, as soon as graduation is over, these people will no longer be your friends. In fact, you will likely never see them again except for class reunions. I have no association at all with my graduation class except for two, Mike Long and Mel Carpenter and that's because we have like faith and they both attend here at Blodgett. So, this will be a time when you will be making new friends; be responsible in choosing your friends.

This will be a time when you will choose your path spiritually. Let me stress the importance of staying close to the Lord during this transition time.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. This expression “remember now thou Creator” carries with it a meaning more than “*mental recall*”. It embraces the idea of remembering His will and doing it. Now there is a lot of wisdom in this concept. While you are young, your thinking and memory is keener than when you get older. So, this is the time to study and commit to memory God's word.

While you are young, your eyes and hearing and health in general are better than it is when you begin to age. You have more energy. You are in the prime time of life to serve the Lord. I recall when I was 21 years of age, I questioned my faith and started searching the scripture as to why I believed what I believed. I wanted to know if I could support scripturally (1) the things I believed regarding becoming a Christian; (2) the way of worship, (3) the way the church is organized, etc.; or was I doing those things because that's what my parents believed and I grew up believing. I diligently studied and developed my own faith. I encourage you to do the same in the days of thy youth.

Now the Lord has been good to you in that you have the mental capacity to learn. You are graduating from high school. Since the Lord had been good to you, you don't need to forget him. Usually for young people venturing out on their own there are times when you might struggle a little bit financially. A Good passage to lean on is ***Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*** If you keep the Lord first, then things will work out for you and he will provide for you.

But there is a danger of you leaving the church because surveys reveal that many do. LifeWay Research data shows that about 70% of young adults who indicated they attended church regularly for at least one year in high school do, in fact, drop out—but their study noted in the timeframe of our study almost two-thirds return and currently attend church. Some of the surveys show a lack of intentionally dropping out. Eighty percent of young people who dropped out of church said they did not plan to do so during high school. It's not that they

rejected the church and left because they had significant disagreements with their theological upbringing or out of some sense of rebellion. No. for the most part, they simply lost track of the church and stop seeing it as important to their life. The Lord had reasons when he had Paul to write *Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Now there is some advice I want you to take with you as you leave the nest and venture out on your own. This advice is from the apostle Paul and found in 1 Thes 5. V14 begins with, “*Now we exhort you brethren; ...*” Now here is list of things that you are exhorted to do.

(16) REJOICE EVERMORE. Be happy. Understand happiness is a choice and is not based on circumstances. Now there are going to be some unhappy occasions as well as times of sadness that came your way, but you can be happy nonetheless. V17-18 tells us how. **(17) PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. (18) IN EVERY THING GIVE THANKS: FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS CONCERNING YOU.**

You can be happy if you stay close to God. Have an active and vibrate prayer life. Don’t leave God out of your decisions. V18 tells us to give thanks in everything. This would include those unhappy times. When things are not going so well, there is still something for you to be thankful.

There was a time before the writing of this letter to the church in Thessalonica that Paul and Silas (Acts 16) had been beaten with many stripes. No doubt he was not happy about his circumstances, but Paul never lost his faith. To make matters worse, they were they were tossed into the inner part of prison with their feet in stocks. Bad circumstances – yet they were not complaining or griping. **LESSON TO LEARN IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY-DON’T BE A COMPLAINER. Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.** Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus CONCERNING YOU.

(19) QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT. To quench something is to kill it or put it out. It’s like quenching a fire; you put it out. Don’t kill the Spirit. Putting it another way, don’t let the spiritual fire burn out by laying aside your faith. The Holy Spirit is instrumental in giving us the written word. You kill the Spirit when you reject that word. You quench the Spirit when you fail to live by the word that the Spirit gave. So many young people when they leave home also leave the church and any Bible study habits they might have. **DON’T DO THAT.** There is going to be a strong urge to skip worship for something else. Don’t fall into that snare of the devil. You remain faithful and quench not the Spirit.

Closely related is v20. **DESPISE NOT PROPHECYINGS.** Prophecy was imparting Gods word by God’s spokesmen. We have the Bible today because of the prophets. **2 Peter 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.** When you despise the prophesying, you are rejecting the Word of God – the Bible. Don’t leave the word out of your life. I understand that there will be a lot of things competing for you time. But it is a big mistake to let them crowd out any time for Bible study. It’s through Bible study that you are approved by God. **2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

(21) PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD. When you get out on your own, you will encounter a lot of different views and opinions. Don't just blindly accept things because someone viewed as authority says them. You are likely to face things that appear to be innocent at first, but can become very sinful and damning; prove all things. The advice of the apostle Paul is not to be gullible; check things out before accepting them as truth. This is especially true if you go to college. Many college professors want you to think outside the box so they toss out there all kinds of stuff. You will likely encounter those that doubt the existence of God and the Biblical account of creation. When you do, **PROVE ALL THINGS and HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.**

(22) ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL. Christians should keep themselves from all false teaching. This seems to be the context here. However, this is sound advice that takes care of a lot of the gray areas. The Bible is clear about some things being wrong while other areas may be fuzzy and you have to use good judgment. Here is divine advice. If there is any doubt or if there is any appearance that something might be wrong, then leave it alone. If that party has the possibility of getting out of hand, either don't go or leave. If there is a chance that that new date might lead to immorality, then break it off and avoid that immoral relationship.

Make up your minds ahead of time that you are going to live a righteous life. This is what the young Hebrew boy Daniel did. ***Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:*** Daniel made up his mind ahead of time that he would not do what was wrong. Make up your mind today that you are going to abstain from all appearance of evil.

On another occasion Paul wrote and reminds us that evil companions would corrupt good behavior. ***1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.***

The ESV reads, ***Don't be fooled: "Bad friends will ruin good habits."***

Be careful in the choosing of your friends. Don't be deceived. A failure to believe right doctrine affects one moral life. Wicked friends will turn one away from God and moral behavior. If these new friends you will make are encouraging you to do things that seems questionable to you, then don't do it. I have seen many young men come through the jail that just got out of high school and hooked up with the wrong crowd and went along with their habits. **YOU ARE BETTER OFF NOT HAVING ANY FRIENDS THAN TO HAVE BAD FRIENDS.**

On other bit of advice is what Paul told his young mentor Timothy. ***1 Timothy 4:12-13 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (13) Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*** You are going to be an example to others. Paul's instruction is to be a good example by the way you live. You give attention to the reading of scripture; you be an encourager to others, and you hold fast the doctrine of Christ.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Don't grow old and look back and say, I wish I had done more for the Lord when I was young and had all that energy and good health.

Invitation