

# “You Have Not Passed This Way Before”

**Introduction.** What’s so important about the Ark of the Covenant? It represented the person and promises of God. It pointed to the fact that as the Israelites set out to cross the Jordan, invade, and possess the land, they must not do so in their own strength, but in God’s, because God would go before them as their source of victory. Therefore, Joshua told Israel, “Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before” (Joshua 3:4).

And this is the case with all of life. We fix our eyes on God and follow Him each day. The reason why is we haven’t passed this way before.

Graduation is a natural time to apply this principle, because graduation is a rite of passage, a landmark event. It marks a young person’s transition from student to graduate, and from one social state to another. It’s a public recognition of their academic achievement and personal growth. Graduation ceremonies celebrate the fruits of hard work and sacrifice, and signify that a person has left a previous chapter of their lives to enter a new one. It’s truly a bridge between your past and future.

Given all this significance, there’s one way that we can elevate it even beyond what we have. And that’s by considering graduation as a time to make some seriously significant spiritual applications. Let’s study four of them today.

## ***I. Plan Purposefully***

- A. Paul said, “but ONE thing I do ...” (Philippians 3:13-14). His fixation on living for Christ would only be improved with his gainful death (Philippians 1:21). Paul’s purpose was clear and it should be the same for every Christian (Galatians 2:20b). Christ must be all; He must be our sole purpose.
- B. Jesus is the head of the church. But Ephesians 1:22-23 says more. The church is also the full expression of Jesus Christ, who Himself fills everything there is. Since the church has so much incredible cosmic significance, it’s a good idea for you to plan purposefully to be an active part of it in your coming years.
- C. Daniel resisted compromise on one hand when he resisted the king’s food, which likely disregarded the Jewish rules of eating. But you can state it a different way. He demonstrated that he was going to live for God, from his young life in Daniel 1 to his advanced age in Daniel 6.

## ***II. Prepare Prayerfully***

- A. “Judo hands” is a moniker for injuries to the fingers that are predominantly a result from grip fighting, being thrown, and attempting to throw or during groundwork. According to early church tradition, James the half-brother of Jesus had knees like a camel due to being on them so often in prayer. Someone has said that prayer is like quietly opening a door and slipping into the presence of God. It should precede everything; it should be our priority (1 Timothy 2:1).
- B. I want to encourage all our graduates to be faithful Christians who are fervent in prayer, like David (Psalm 55:17). The Bible is God talking to humanity; prayer is when we talk to God. Prayer will be the cement of your spirituality. If you don’t

come into the habit of praying to God, there's a good chance you'll be a nominal Christian. It benefits you tremendously (James 1:5).

- C. You need to know that there were many events in people's lives that prompted them to pray to God:
  - 1. Anxiety — Moses (Numbers 11:11-15).
  - 2. Discouragement — Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10).
  - 3. Gratitude — Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-53).
  - 4. Penitence — Ezra (Ezra 9:5-15).
  - 5. Persecution — Daniel (Daniel 6:10).
  - 6. Distress — Jonah (Jonah 2:1-9).
  - 7. Temptation — Jesus (Matthew 26:39, 42).
  - 8. Sickness — Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- D. All of these godly, conscientious people demonstrate that it's always time to pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1). Prayer works so don't turn your back on God as you start your adult life (Matthew 7:7-11).

### **III. Proceed Positively**

- A. The right attitude is crucial and priceless. Don't spend your precious time asking, "Why isn't the world a better place?" It'll only be time wasted. The question to ask is, "How can I make it better? To that there is an answer," said Leo Buscaglia.
- B. Positive Christianity shines the brightest at home because it shines farther throughout the world. The "I can" attitude will certainly result in an outcome focused on heaven (Philippians 4:13).
  - 1. You may be leaving high school or college and have honestly lived a life of immodesty, dancing, drinking, bad language, and sexual immorality — which very few people (including your parents) may know about.
  - 2. But you've become an adult, and you can put these sins away now and live in holiness and goodness (2 Corinthians 7:1).
- C. Queen Esther was impressive among all other candidates for queen in Esther 2:17. When she was chosen as queen, she used that station in life to save her people (Esther 4:15), even though it wasn't an easy task (v. 10).

### **IV. Pursue Persistently**

- A. Anything worth doing is worth doing right and with all your might (cp. Colossians 3:17, 23-24; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Hebrews 12:1-2). Pursuable persistence is characterized by unity, humility, and service (Philippians 2:1-4). Such is the content of the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5).
- B. As you get older, you're going to be a spouse, parent, worker, and/or boss. All of this is regulated by the Lord (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1).
- C. The apostle John was a young man when he started with Jesus as a disciple. He lived all his life until the point of exile on Patmos (Revelation 1:9). He was a fine example of someone who pursued righteousness persistently.
  - 1. "Deconversion" is the loss of faith in a given religion and return to a previously held religion or non-religion (typically atheism, agnosticism, or

rationalism). As you continue in your lives, if you hang out with deconversionists, then you're likely to leave the faith.

2. But you do need a safe space where you can ask questions and get real answers for how the Bible handles life. That's what we try to provide here.
  - a) We don't want to shy away from or ignore the tough questions in life. We want you to feel comfortable broaching them with us.
  - b) God's answers to the tough parts of life deserve to be heard — and we need to be prepared to give those answers.

**Conclusion.** Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you."

Graduates need God's guidance every day. If you want to live successfully, then follow His guidance, because you have not passed this way before. We'll finish with Lou Holtz: "Your talent determines what you can do. Your motivation determines how much you are willing to do. Your attitude determines how well you do it."

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