

# Prepared for Purpose

## *Lessons for the Road Ahead*

**Introduction.** Graduation looms for hundreds of students in the East Texas area, and it's a big part of life in more than one way. It's not only a transition to a more mature level, it's also a transition to deeper spirituality.

I'm reminded of God's words to Joshua in 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." My job is to "command" you in the sense of laying out how you can face the road ahead by living more like Jesus. Open your Bible and let's study four suggestions on how you can be prepared for this purpose.

### ***I. Remember Your Creator***

- A. There's an incredible value of believing in God, as Creator, governor of Universe, although it may not be popular with people you know (Psalm 19:1-6; Ecclesiastes 12:1).
- B. There are plenty of Scriptures that you need to regularly read so that your view of God stays fresh and in your mind daily (Genesis 1:1-2:25; Psalm 33:6, 9; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 11:3). Just putting your phone down and being in nature will remind you of God's eternal power and Godhead (Romans 1:20).
- C. Weekly worship with God's (sometimes imperfect) people is a far greater strengthening mechanism than Christians think, because gathered worship trains the heart to remember Him (cp. Nehemiah 9:6).
- D. Finally, enjoy your youth and life with gratitude, but let that enjoyment stay under God's authority rather than replacing Him (Ecclesiastes 5:18-20).

### ***II. Watch Your Influences***

- A. The Bible's recurring theme is to guard your heart, renew your mind, and avoid influences that pull you away from Christ (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:16-20).
  - 1. What I take into my mind can really define what I think, then what I do, and finally what I become. careful attention to what enters your mind and heart.
  - 2. Therefore, filter what you watch, listen to, and scroll through; ask whether it strengthens faith or dulls spiritual sensitivity.
    - a) If a show, playlist, or online account repeatedly stirs up lust, anger, envy, cynicism, or worldliness, it's not a neutral influence.
    - b) A wise response is to reduce exposure, replace it with better input, and ask a trusted Christian to help you stay accountable.
- B. Too many influences from too many directions may lead to your ruin (Proverbs 18:24). It's better to have one faithful friend than numerous unreliable ones who could drive you toward the devil. In fact, good friends are often better than family.
  - 1. Several biblical examples show how good people were worn down:
    - a) Samson was worn down by Delilah's pressure and betrayed his sacred vow before God.
    - b) Solomon was turned toward other gods by his foreign wives, and his heart was divided.

- c) Joash stayed faithful while Jehoiada lived, but later fell under corrupt influences and turned to idolatry.
- 2. When you build friendships with genuine Christians who encourage faithfulness and keep spiritual realities important, you've gained a window into better faithfulness and a more rewarding life.
- 3. Therefore, choose friendships and larger relationships with brethren (in the context of congregational fellowship) that sharpens your walk with God, not that normalizes compromise.
- 4. Pray regularly and specifically for discernment, because prayer guards your heart and instills dependence on God (Philippians 1:9-11; 4:6-7).
- C. Let me leave this point with four simple questions to test your influences:
  - 1. Does this draw me toward holiness or compromise?
  - 2. Does this feed peace, purity, and wisdom, or agitation and confusion?
  - 3. Would I be comfortable inviting Christ into this habit, show, relationship, or conversation?
  - 4. Is this helping me renew my mind, or conform me to the world?

### **III. Define Your Success**

- A. Several biblical individuals achieved greatness, even though they weren't the most gifted, but because they held to righteous principles.
  - 1. Joseph rose from slavery and prison to govern in Egypt, and he used that position to save many lives.
  - 2. David became a great king, but his success began with a heart that was like God's heart.
  - 3. Esther gained influence in a royal court and used it courageously to protect God's people against their enemies.
- B. Their success wasn't just achievement, but faithfulness: they honored God and used their talents with integrity.
  - 1. That's a helpful biblical definition of success, because it keeps character at the center, letting you be devoted and truly successful at the same time.
  - 2. Let me share with you four guidelines that will help your spiritual success.
    - a) Don't chase money and make it the sole measure of success (cp. Proverbs 3:3-4; 16:3). However, if you do succeed in amassing wealth, then give back (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
    - b) Don't separate "religious" life from "normal" life; treat work, study, and relationships as places to honor God.
    - c) Keep learning and stay teachable, because maturity includes growing in wisdom and discernment ("go on unto perfection," Hebrews 6:1).
    - d) Live with integrity, honesty, compassion, and self-control in public and private. Spiritual strength isn't only about beliefs, but also daily character.

### **IV. Take Time for Yourself**

- A. The fast-paced busyness is tremendously destructive to you as a student, spouse, parent, and Christian. As you get older and have more responsibilities, please don't worship at the altar of "busyness."

- B. To be at your best, you need to develop some quiet time by yourself.
  - 1. This kind of time isn't selfish; it's a way of staying spiritually healthy so you can keep your spirit better focused on God.
  - 2. Silence, prayer, and reflection help you slow down, be closer to God, and realign your life with spiritual realities (Psalm 16:7).
    - a) Challenge yourself to read one psalm per day, and write one sentence detailing a blessing you're grateful from God.
    - b) During this time, do yourself a favor and turn your phone off because it has too many distractions. Use a paper Bible and write your observations on physical paper.
- C. Taking time for yourself will consistently realign you to loving God and loving your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). This in turn focuses you on seeking first things first and manifesting active obedience (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:16).

**Conclusion.** It's always gratifying to celebrate all that God has done in a graduate's life, but we can also look ahead with confidence. The road before you may bring change, uncertainty, and new responsibilities, but the same God who has carried you this far will guide you further.

David beautifully expressed, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand" (Psalm 37:23-24).

Go forward with courage, walk in faith, and remember that your life will matter most when it's lived for the glory of God.