

A SIGNIFICANT JOURNEY

Graduation 2015

Proverbs 3:1-8

A significant journey is ending for you...and no doubt you are eager to get going on the next one. But first, go ahead and savor the moment. Such clear rites of passage don't come often in life...so thank God for the moment. Education is a profound gift.

And on behalf of your parents, be gracious with their nostalgia and tears and pictures. It's a rite of passage for them too.

You're probably receiving a lot of advice. But before you set off down the twisted and winding road before you, here are a few travel notes from my own excursion and from my family's journey. Hopefully they will be beneficial, and help you navigate what lies ahead.

I. THE ROAD TO JOY IS HARD:

This road of life you're staring down doesn't have to be just a road *of* life...but a road *to* life...the **abundant** life (**John 10:10**)...but only if you follow **the** Way that gives life (**John 14:6**)...Jesus.

The road is going to get very hard at times. Other roads are going to look very appealing to you when you are *weary, discouraged, confused, angry, tempted by fleshly desires, or grieving*. These roads will appear much easier...and they probably will be much easier...initially. But beware! The path of *least resistance* is the path of *least reward*...because it brings the *least refinement*. Jesus goes much further when He warns that a path like this *leads to destruction*...and sometimes even *death* (**Proverbs 14:12; 16:25**).

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Don't let anyone tell you that life is all about the *journey*. It isn't true. The journey is all about the *destination*...where are you going to ultimately *arrive*. What matters most is where you end up. You will have to forego many *short-term pleasures* and refrain from many of what the world calls *life's experiences* in order to reach that which is *truly life*.

“Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

~I Timothy 6:18-19

Go for *joy*...over *happiness*. Seek the *greatest treasure* which gives the *greatest joy*. Even though the road to it may be the *hardest* and most *challenging*. Don't settle for *simple pleasures*. If God is your *treasure*, you'll gain everything. If He's not, you'll lose it all.

II. TRUST GOD'S PROMISES...NOT YOUR PERCEPTIONS: Trust God's Word...Not Your Emotions.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

~Proverbs 3:5-6

Know the Word. Do not neglect the Word. Meditate on the Word. Memorize Scripture. Store the Word in your heart.

“Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”

~Psalm 119:11

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

~Colossians 3:16-17

Daily Bible reading has nothing to do with your performing a ritual for God's approval...but it has everything to do with your *spiritual survival*. Scripture will keep you *firmly rooted*...because the Bible tells you what is real. What you *perceive* with your senses, how you interpret your *perceptions*, and how your *emotions* respond, are *unreliable indicators of reality*. They will frequently not tell you the truth. And when they do, their reports will often be faulty because they are based on a very thin slice of reality. They can't tell you the big picture. You need to know what God says is true and plant yourself there.

Life is not all about the journey. The journey is all about the destination...it's all about where you arrive.

Many, many times it will look to you like God's *promises* are not real or will not come true. At those moments...and I can't stress this enough...***don't trust your emotions or your own perceptions***. I have learned this lesson over many years and in many different, and

at times, severe ways. I tell you the truth...not once has God's **Word** and **promises** failed me. My **emotions** and **perceptions**...they have **deceived** and **failed** me time and time again.

So, **live** in the Word...**immerse** yourself in the Word...**hide** God's Word in your heart and it will help you live...it will give you life!

III. PRAY "WHATEVER IT TAKES" PRAYERS:

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened."

~Luke 11:9-10

Ask God for everything...even in regards to the smallest details of your life. The world tells you that you are the master of your fate and must fend for yourself. But God wants you to believe that you **"cannot receive even one thing unless it is given (you) from heaven"** (**John 3:27**) and that **"apart from (Jesus) you can do nothing"** (**John 15:5**). Jesus invites you to **ask, seek, and knock**. Take Him up on it.

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

~Philippians 4:19

And when praying for your own heart, don't be afraid to pray, **"Whatever it takes, Lord."** God is glorified through those kinds of prayers. He takes them seriously and answers them. You will not always recognize the answers initially, because they will come in ways you don't expect. They will often be **harder** than you expected. They will probably even **cost** you more than you were counting on...or initially willing to pay. But don't be afraid. You will not regret such prayers. Through them God will reveal Himself in ways you never knew before, or could have even dreamed. And you will receive some of the **best gifts** and **richest blessings** of this life.

"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

~I Thessalonians 5:16-18

IV. BE YOURSELF:

Always remember, Jesus wants you to be yourself. He doesn't want you to be anyone else. He **made** you...He **formed** you...He **gave** you life. He didn't make any mistakes. He wants you to become a more sanctified, excellent you (**I Thessalonians 4:3**).

"For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."

~Psalm 139:13-16

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you..."

~Jeremiah 1:5

He's more concerned about your **holiness** than even your **happiness**. Another way of saying this is...He's more concerned about your **character** than your **calling**. You bear God's image in a unique way. You have a unique **calling** on your life. Let God do His work **in** and **through** you in order for you to be **equipped** for that **calling** (**II Timothy 3:16-17**).

You will be tempted along the way to compare yourself with others. Sometimes you will feel the **pride of superiority**; sometimes you will feel the **despair of inferiority**. In all your comparisons Jesus's word to you will be...**"You follow me!"** (**John 21:22**).

At the end of your journey, the status and achievements the world most admires will mean nothing (**Mathew 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25**). All that will matter is whether or not you were **faithful** ...whether or not you have been a **faithful steward** of what Jesus entrusted to you.

Graduate, if God is your treasure, you will gain everything. If He's not, you will lose it all.

Now that you have your degree...go out and get your education!