

GRADUATION 2017
What Is God's Calling In Your Life
I Timothy 4:12

“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”

Congratulations, class of 2017. Your day has finally come. This is a noble accomplishment in your lives. Years of hard work have earned you the cap, the gown, and the degree or diploma. For many, it's the end of some of the best years of your lives...the opportunity to *experience freedom and independence, learning from great teachers, and making lifelong friends.*

But remember...degrees and diplomas don't guarantee your success. An increasing majority every year end up not even using their bachelor's degree in their future.

Leaving that which has provided you *comfort, community, and security* can end up being a *perplexing and confusing crash* into *reality*. Here are **seven things to remember** as you make this transition in your life.

SEVEN TRUTHS TO REMEMBER:

1. RECOGNIZE THAT GOD HAS CREATED YOU FOR SOMETHING WITH PURPOSE:

“The Lord has made everything for its own purpose...”
~Proverbs 16:4

Whether a *believer* or *nonbeliever*...every human being was made...knitted together in his or her mother's womb...for the *glory of God*. God says...

“...Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone...whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”
~Isaiah 43:6b-7

This is especially true for the *child of God*. God's ultimate *purpose* for your life...and it's a *real* and *tangible purpose* ...has not changed. ***That He may be glorified through you.***

God made you for Himself...not to gain *prominence* or *prosperity*, which typically leads to *self-sufficiency* or *pride*. Whatever you do...do it with all you heart for God's *glory*.

“...Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
~I Corinthians 10:31

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

~Matthew 5:16

2. REALIZE THAT LIFE IS TOUGH:

This road of life that you're staring down shouldn't be just the road *of* life...but a road *to* life...the **abundant Christian life**.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”
~John 10:10

But this will happen 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...especially when you are *tired, discouraged, confused, angry, tempted by fleshly desires, or grieving*. These alternate roads are going to ***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; Proverbs 16:25**).

Don't let anyone tell you that life is all about the *journey*. It's not true. A life lived for **God's glory** is all about the *destination*. The question is...where are you going to ultimately *arrive...eternally*. What matters most...is where you end up. You will have to *fore-go* 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 *toughest* and most *challenging*. Don't settle for *simple pleasures*. Go for *deep joy*.

3. IDENTIFY AND USE YOUR GIFTEDNESS AND TALENT:

- **Consider your unique gifting.**

People have different *skills* and *desires* that *equip* them to succeed at certain tasks. Some are gifted at *teaching*, others at *leading*, others at *administration*, and the list goes on and on (**Romans 12:6–8; I Corinthians 12:4–11; I Peter 4:9–11**). Knowing what you are *gifted* at and what you *enjoy doing* is one important part of *one's calling*.

If every time you go to fix something, you do more harm than good, then being a mechanic might not be in your future. If you hate math, then accounting probably isn't the way to go. An ideal job is one that you both *enjoy* and are *gifted* at (**Romans 12:6–8; Ecclesiastes 3:22**), so this is an important part of determining God's *calling* for you.

There will certainly be parts of any profession that you do not like and will need to persevere through. But it's good to find something that *fits who you are* and *how God has made you*. So *think* and *pray* long and hard about *who you are* and what productive activities *bring you joy*.

- **Assess your aptitude in your gifting.**

Besides *different gifting's*, people also have *different levels of giftedness*. With the gift of leadership, one person may be gifted to lead a group of *ten* and another gifted to lead a group of a *thousand* (**Exodus 18:21, 25; Deuteronomy 1:15**). Two people may have a gift of management, yet one will excel at managing a small business, while another can effectively run a billion-dollar corporation. You might have an athletic gift...and enjoy playing football, soccer, basketball, or baseball. But is it strong enough to earn a living?

God calls us to use our *gifts* in accordance with the measure He gives them to us (**Romans 12:3**). People can have *similar gifts* but the *different capacities* of those gifts can put them in very different roles. Each has a gifting with great *dignity* and *value*, but it comes in *different measures*.

- **Be diligent in growing and developing your giftedness.**

It is not an excuse to just say that I'm not gifted in that area...or I'm limited in that area so I can do that. Not *working hard to grow* and *develop your gift and talent* is a direct affront to the Lord. Don't be *lazy*.

- **Investigate the opportunities in front of you.**

Finally, while we can make many plans and have all kinds of lofty desires, it's always *the Lord's purpose that prevails*.

“The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

~Proverbs 16:9

“Man’s steps are ordained by the Lord; how then can man understand his way?”

~Proverbs 20:24

No one likes to have ***doors shut on them***...or to hear the word ***“no.”*** But sometimes those ***slammed doors*** and the ***“no’s”*** are vital for ***walking with God***. Closed doors can be the Lord sending us in a direction we probably would never have gone on our own (***Acts 16:7–9...Paul’s second missionary journey***). Other times they can be a ***wakeup call***, showing us that we need more preparation before taking the next step.

As you look at the opportunities that do open for you, take time to reflect on who you are and which opportunity best fits your ***gifting, desires, aptitudes***, and the unique mixture of ***all three***.

Talk about these things with people you respect and who know you well...***people who will tell you the truth***. ***Family*** and ***friends*** can often see your life from a more objective position. They may see where you do well and what you enjoy, and may have good counsel on where you might thrive. Their observations aren’t infallible, of course, but you would be wise to ***receive the wisdom*** of ***Proverbs 15:22***, ***“Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.”*** Simply put, talk with people about your opportunities, and consider their input.

Yes...at any point along the path of your life there could be a ***blinding light*** and an ***audible voice***, but that’s rare.

4. BE DISCERNING AND WISE WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL MEDIA:

All of you know ***social media*** better than I do. As a matter of fact, I’m not on Facebook...I don’t have a twitter account...or any other social media account. And what I’m about to state is the obvious...stuff that you already know:

- ***Think long term before posting anything...a comment ...a picture...a critique.***
- ***When posting...realize that your intent isn’t necessarily what everyone else will perceive.*** Schools, employers, supervisors, and others are there looking.
- ***Don’t saying something publicly because you don’t have the courage to say it privately.***
- ***Don’t over disclose your struggles and emotions.*** Don’t live your life on social media.
- ***Don’t post when you’re emotional or angry.***
- ***Remember...the internet is permanent.***

5. MAKE GOD’S WORD THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR VERY BEING:

Learn to trust God’s Word as ***truth***...not your ***emotions*** or your ***rationalization***...or ***other’s opinion*** or ***interpretation***.

“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. ***Read*** 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***. The enemy will frequently use these things to not tell you the truth. You need to know what God says is ***true*** and plant yourself there.

Many, many times ***God’s Word*** is going to be challenged ...that it isn’t real or that it isn’t true. At those moments... and I can’t stress this enough...***don’t trust your emotions or your own perceptions or what others think***. I have learned this lesson over many years and in many different, and at times, difficult ways. I tell you the truth...not once has God’s ***Word*** 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 ***direct*** you in life...it will ***give*** you ***life!***

6. LEARN TO PRAY:

“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 know and trust that you ***“...can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven”*** (John 3:27) and that ***“...apart from Me (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

“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

God intends for our needs to bring us to our knees. We all desperately need to learn the ***futility of self-reliance*** and the ***reward*** of relying wholly on God. Go to Him with your ***questions***, your ***anxiousness***, and your ***distress***.

7. UNDERSTAND THAT FRIENDSHIPS ARE INDISPENSABLE:

“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

~Proverbs 27:17

Especially ***spiritually mature friends***. They will be used to ***refine*** you and ***mold*** you and ***protect*** you.

“Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals.”

~I Corinthians 15:33

“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

~Proverbs 13:20

“Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge.”

~Proverbs 14:7

“Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.”

~I Peter 3:16

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!”

~Psalm 1:1

For those who have just graduated from college...and for those who are headed to college...it's no surprise that some of our best friends are people you met, or will meet, while in college.

But friendships in the professional world...they can be more challenging to develop. You probably won't just run into your friends in the real world. You'll have to be intentional in making friends. Set aside time to be together, coordinate schedules, and make it happen regularly. It's won't necessarily be ***convenient***, but it's ***critical***. In fact, God has given you great friends so that you would have someone when you walk through hard and trying times.

God allows us to experience ***various trials*** so that we will be prepared to be there when others need a friend.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

~II Corinthians 1:3-4

God may speak through your friends...their ***knowledge of God's word***, their ***love for you***, their ***experience in the world***, and their ***hope in Jesus for your future***...to keep you in the ***faith***, walking in line with the gospel.

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.”

~Proverbs 12:15

“A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out.”

~Proverbs 20:5

Satan wants to kill more than your vocational expectations and aspirations. He is a ***thief***, an ***accuser***, and a ***deceiver***. His goals are to ***inspire shame, promote procrastination, justify self-pity, fan the flame of fear, make you doubt God's provision, and undermine your faith***. Resist him at every point.

ONE FINAL WORD:

A **New York Times** story about ***millennials*** in the workplace stated ***three concerning issues***:

- ***Managers struggle with their young employees' sense of entitlement.***
- ***A tendency to overshare on social media.***
- ***And frankness verging on insubordination.***

Maturing involves the ability to recognize the distinction between ***who you are today*** and ***who you seek to become***. My

hope is that you will begin to own the **Augustinian** awareness that *not everything we long or lust for is something we should really want*.

Healthy people can admit that there are *unhealthy yearnings*. It is not “*fake*” to aim to mature. And it is not “*fake*” to begin modeling the desired *character* and *behavior* even before it is a full and fair representation of who you are at the moment.

Don't stop. Keep moving forward...keep praying...keep calling out. Resist the temptation to retreat in defeat. Instead, walk in *victory*...live the *victorious Christian life*...in a way that God will be *most glorified*.