

TO THE CLASS OF 2020

MAY 24, 2020

Many congratulations to the class of 2020, you have checked all the boxes and made it to the end. It's been quite a while since I graduated, but I have fond memories of the past. None of my fond graduation memories, however, include preparing a speech. I was never the salutatorian, or valedictorian, or even student body president. I was a graduate and that was sufficient. Actually, no one asked me to prepare a speech for today, either, but I had a few things I wanted to share with the Class of 2020.



I know you have completed the requirements, you have had your fun, hopefully you have experienced great personal growth, and I suspect you are eager to begin a new chapter of your life. I know this is not how you expected your final year to end, but please don't fret. Think of #stayathome as extra preparation time for your future. I'm sure you have been busy for the past few years - track, football, marching band, swim team, Beta club, Student Council, and more, and you needed a break, so make the most of it. Use your time wisely. Since your time with friends is limited, use the time to concentrate on you. You have reached a milestone, and simultaneously a fork in the road. Free-will is yours to pursue as you enter the next stages of your life.

A few words from the Apostle Paul, as you ponder your next steps.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Romans 12:3-8

God has given all of His children free-will, but also the ability to think and reason with good judgement and sound wisdom. As you execute your free-will, I urge you to know your purpose. As you #stayathome, take some time to be still and meditate, without the stress and distraction of your pre-Coronavirus life. This quiet time is not what you wanted, but it may be just what you

need to help you develop the ability to execute your free-will for the purpose God intends for your future.

Just as your body has different parts that all function together, God has created many people on Earth with different talents and spiritual gifts that must function together to bring Him glory. What will you do? Who are you? What is your talent? Yes, those are the big questions. I graduated high school in 1994 and those were not the questions on my mind. They weren't the questions on my mind at my college graduation either. I can tell you with absolute certainty, that I gave very little thought to my God-given talents or spiritual gifts. I took career inventories, but I did not like or believe the results, so I went about my merry way trying to make my own life work. What I didn't know was that God's plan would prevail, and that I could have saved myself some trouble if I had checked with Him sooner rather than later. (The inventories were correct, by the way...)

What are talents - you might be wondering? Talents are your innate strengths. Maybe you have excelled in math and find it fun and satisfying. Maybe calculation and analysis are your talents. Maybe it doesn't bother you to stand and present to the class, if so, maybe public speaking is your talent. Talents can include the ability to write, to communicate, to organize, draw, to lead, plan, or analyze. This is just a short list, but everyone has talents. What are your talents and how will you use them?

Spiritual gifts are many, as well! Paul lists prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, and giving as examples. If your talent is communication and your spiritual gift is encouragement, maybe your life should be devoted to communicating encouraging words to those in need. How? Maybe you will start a nonprofit or rally people to send letters to the military, maybe you will work for hospice to encourage families experiencing loss. Maybe majoring in financial management will not fill your cup, maybe you should try social work or hospitality management. Maybe you will not become a millionaire, but I've heard it said, "do what you love and you will never work a day in your life."

Class of 2020, take some time now, before everything opens again, to renew your mind and consider how you are set apart from the rest of the world by your God-given talents and spiritual gifts. The Apostle Paul advises that your life's work should follow your talents and spiritual gifts. I don't think this was told to me when I was graduating, nor even when I was attempting to choose a major. Find someone to speak with, someone who is undoubtedly walking in his or her calling to help you identify yours. Yes, some majors may find employment more readily than others, but I believe God has a plan for all of His children.

Class of 2020, I know you have reached the end of a portion of your schooling, and you may be ready to put books aside for a while. I implore you to keep one book handy and refer to it often, daily. That book is the Bible. While you have some time and you are seeking to make big decisions, the best way to find out who you are and what your future holds, is to read the Bible. It contains God's instructions for daily living. The sooner you realize that, the better off you will be. God created you, and He gave you a purpose and a place in this world. If you trust in Him,

he will lead you to your destiny. Sure, you may find it on your own, but He has designed an individualized edification plan just for you. Seek Him and He will show you the way.

As I close, I'd like to share two more Scriptures.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

For even the Son of Man [that's a reference to Jesus] came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

We don't know why God allowed Covid-19 to strike at this specific time, but as with anything there are theories. Let me share one for the Class of 2020. The human race has been around for thousands of years, humans have been trying to plan their own course for all of those years. Humans are driven by money and fame (and sin, I might add). Rather than follow God's plan for our lives, we try to make our own plans. We choose the major that makes the most money. We network with people we think will help us make a name for ourselves. Maybe, just maybe, Class of 2020, God decided that the pride of humanity needed to be reset. Maybe He decided that graduating Class of 2020, needed something the graduates who came before did not have, and that's time to pray and meditate on their talents and spiritual gifts that they might immediately begin to fulfill their purpose. There is great need in this world, God has put people here to serve others. Class of 2020, who will you serve? What will you do? How will you use your talents and gifts for God's glory? Amen.

Congratulations, Class of 2020.

Well done.

Kim