

Advice For Graduates

It is the season of graduations, and we have some advice for all the graduates, and everyone else, that will help set you up for success in life.

Introduction

We are entering summer and that means school years are coming to a close and students are going through various graduations. Our youngest child is one of those graduates this year graduating from high school and preparing to enter the world.

We are often asked for words of wisdom or advice for graduates. When we were youth pastors it was an annual topic to share from the pulpit. There is advice that can be very specific for a graduate or group of graduates, and then there is general advice for all graduates.

We have some specific advice for our daughter and her close friends, but we also have some general scriptural advice for all graduates that stand the test of time. There are three passages of scripture that have resonated with me throughout the years of my Christian life. These three passages build upon one another and help guide us to exactly where God wants us to be regardless of what we are doing.

Let's look at those three passages of scripture and how they apply to life in the world today and how they build upon each other to give the best advice for graduates.

Our Whole Heart

The first passage we want to read and share as advice for graduates is Psalm 119:10-11.

Psalms 119:10-11

(10) I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. (11) I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Sin is what separates us from God. Adam and Eve brought original sin into the world and mankind has battled sin ever since. Each day we are faced with temptations that are pleasing to the eye or flesh, the desire to hide our mistakes, and the hunger for power and money. These are all things that are contrary to God's plan for anyone and are deep-seated sins. We can avoid these types of things by reading and committing what Psalms 119:10-11 says to our hearts.

First, you must seek God with your whole heart. You seek God with your whole heart by looking for Him in every situation each day of your life. God will always provide a path away from temptation and sin. God will always give you the integrity and wisdom to acknowledge your mistakes and help you address them. Most of all, God will forgive you of your sin, when you seek and serve Him with your whole heart, following Jesus.

The psalmist writes, "do not let me stray from your commands" in verse 10. You can ask God to lead you away from sin and keep you focused on what He has created and gifted you for. It is not about your glory, but God's. Fame and fortune are not for your folly, but for God's use and service. Ask God to keep you from straying from His commands.



The psalmist goes on to say, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." It is important to know God's word and commit it to your heart. God's word is truth. Truth is not relative, nor is truth different for different people or people groups. God is truth and His word teaches us His truth.

Write the truth of God's word in your heart. Filling your whole heart with God's truths will not leave any space for sin in your heart. That is the first piece of advice we have for graduates today.

Keeping God's Commandments

The second piece of scripture we want to share is found in Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

(13) Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

This builds on Psalms 119:10-11. After you commit God's word to your heart, we must not ignore it; we must follow it. The teacher in Ecclesiastes is summing up all his knowledge and wisdom in this single verse at the end of his teaching. In his conclusion the teacher gives two simple instructions; fear God and keep his commandments.

Many misunderstand when they read that we are to fear God. This does not mean we should be afraid of God. God is our father. There is no need to be afraid. Here the word fear is a verb meaning to respect, revere, or hold God in awe. Fearing God means you serve Him with your whole heart with love.

To succeed in life and God's plans and purposes for you, you must fear God. You must respond to Him with sincerity and a deep desire to serve Him and do all He has created and equipped you for. You should do nothing more and nothing less. Respecting God and His plans and purposes for you and others around you is not optional. It is to be our focus.

Likewise, we are to keep God's commandments. It always amazes me when people here in America want to remove monuments and copies of the 10 Commandments from the grounds and walls of public places. Is there a problem with telling people to not steal or murder? What is wrong with telling people not to covet their neighbor's wife? Why can't we tell people it is wrong to lie?

We are to keep God's commandments. Jesus said it best when he spoke about the two greatest commandments in Matthew 22:36-40.

Matthew 22:36-40

(36) "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (37) Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" (38) This is the first and greatest commandment. (39) And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (40) All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. Everything you say and do should be measured against these two things. Our second piece of advice for graduates is to fear God and keep His commandments. Ask yourself at each opportunity, "Does this glorify God or exhibit love for a neighbor?"

Fearing God and keeping His commandments is the whole duty of man.



No Condemnation

The third piece of advice for graduates that builds on top of the previous two is found in John 3:17 which says:

John 3:17

(17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John tells us that God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. Jesus came to save our souls. Jesus came to bridge the gap of sin that Adam and Eve brought into the world. Jesus is the once and perfect sacrifice so that we all can be reconciled to God.

No one is beyond God's saving grace. No one has gone so far that God cannot forgive them and accept them into the family. God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn you. God does not condemn you. Please know that God loves you, period.

As you go into the world, as a Christian, you must also love others the way God does. You must not condemn others or think they are too far gone. Do not give up on anyone. No one is too far gone that God cannot redeem them. They just need to be willing. You need to be willing to be redeemed.

The Apostle Paul tells us this on Romans 8:38-39:

Romans 8:38-39

(38) For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, (39) neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God once we are following Jesus and have made him our Lord and Savior. No one is beyond saving.

Conclusion

If you are graduating this year, congratulations! If you graduated many years ago, congratulations! If you haven't graduated anything, that's okay, being a member of the family of God is the best thing.

We encourage you to hide God's word in your heart, Fear God and keep His commandments, and not condemn anyone just as God does not condemn anyone, but lead them to Jesus who can redeem them.

You don't need to be graduating to apply this advice for graduates to your life today. These are simple truths that are valuable to everyone and should be put in place by everyone every day.

