

## Congratulations, Graduates!

Every year at this time I find myself proud (in a good way) for our graduates. I am proud of our high school graduates, college graduates, GED recipients, and post graduates. Two of whom I am especially proud are Dr. Vinette Harris, who just received her Doctor of Philosophy degree from University of Houston and Dr. Kim Balay, who is receiving her Medical Doctor's degree from Baylor School of Medicine.

I am proud of Vinette because while she and Jarrell were some of the best college professors at Prairie View A&M, she was working on her PHD. Who could have predicted that God would have allowed Jarrell to be transported to heaven while attending his brother's funeral in Jamaica? While being honored to help officiate in Jarrell's funeral in Jamaica, thoughts came through my mind. First of all, I was amazed at all the friends of a lifetime the Meikels had when I visited. The funeral took about four hours, not counting the time to drive into the heart of Jamaica for the internment. As I saw Vinette, Peter, Paul, and Philip, one of my overwhelming thoughts was what would become of this fine wife and these little boys? Vinette was delayed for several years in working on and finishing up her requirements for her degree, but by the grace and goodness of God, she finished. The boys are fine and Vinette is now Mrs. Harris having married a man she has known from her youth.

I am proud of Kim Balay. I often marvel at how she and Tony (one of our fine deacons) met, courted and married. Kim and Tony are great examples of waiting on the Lord for the one God has chosen for us as life partners. Kim's dad was taken to Heaven when she was young and many of those wonderful moments for a daddy's girl were not available for her. One happy day, the man of her dreams came into her life and the love that God held in reserve was birthed in her heart when she met Tony. Due to circumstances beyond her control, the process of courtship was delayed. In God's good time, after waiting seven years, I had the privilege of hearing them say holy vows before God and the world. Oh, happy day! Then something beautiful transpired. Kim became inspiration to Tony to fulfil his dreams. She was there for him; she stood behind him as he traveled around the world, even Rome to study architecture. She was there as he received his Master's degree at Texas A & M. Then Tony became her inspiration to fulfill her dream in becoming a pediatrician and he'll be there for her Tuesday probably giving an A&M "whoop" when she officially becomes Dr. Balay. And now here she is...two wonderful men in her life...her husband Tony...and her son whom they call "Doug" - Kim's father's name. Isn't God good?

The Bible says, *"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life"* (Proverbs 13:12). Meditate for a moment about the meaning of this verse. The word for *sick* in Hebrew is *chalah*: which means to be or become weak, be or become sick, to be or become wounded, be or become diseased, be or become grieved, be or become sorry. The word for *life* is the Hebrew word *chay*: which means living, alive, flowing, fresh (of water) lively, reviving (of the springtime), revival, renewal. So God is saying when hope is postponed, the heart can become wounded, diseased and grieved. But when the desire of the heart is fulfilled (Psalm 37:4) it becomes like springtime! The garden of the heart is bursting with the fruit from the tree of life. Renewal as refreshing as a bubbling brook to a thirsty soul is obtained!

As you graduate from high school, college, or post graduate studies, keep these three aspirations in mind:

### **(1) Give glory to God!**

The great Apostle said, *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"* (I Corinthians 15:10).

Years ago, there was a poor drunken bum staggering by a fence; he had to hold to the fence to put one foot in front of the other. D. L. Moody of Chicago was with a friend who, upon spotting the man, spoke an unkind word. I love the response of Mr. Moody, "There go I but by the grace of God." I can say the same!

You have reached a great goal in life, but let it be a reminder that God gets the glory for giving us the health, the ability to think and reason, and even the strength to walk down an aisle to receive the diploma. To God be the glory, great things He hath done!

**(2) Keep learning; life is a journey, not a destination!**

I appreciate the word that is most commonly used for the graduation ceremony. It is called a commencement. This speaks to us of a beginning, not an end. I have to tell you most of what I know about the ministry, the Bible and people came after I received my diploma!

The greatest men I have known were men that kept learning until their dying day. You and I never become too old to learn! Life is an adventure; learn on! "*And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted*" (Matthew 23:12).

**(3) Be a testimony!**

I like it when the old-time preachers ask, "Do I have a witness?" When someone asks that question, he is really asking, "Is there anybody out there that can say, 'Amen?'" Let me encourage you to take this education and be an inspiration to other people to finish the job! "*And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62).

- Pastor Pope -

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