Graduation: Choices

INTRO

Tonight we are here to honor our graduates.
• I want to welcome them, along with our guests that are here tonight.

As I call your name, graduates, I want you to stand.

Brandi Moyer is graduating from ASU Newport.
• Brandi has been around this church most of her life
  o and recently has become more involved.
• We are thankful for her and her husband Shawn
  o who, incidentally, is getting baptized this Sunday night!
• And her precious girls who are real joy to be around.

Peyton Milligan is graduating from BIC.
• I want to welcome Peyton's family,
  o thank you so much for helping us celebrate tonight.
• I've only known Peyton for a short while
  o but, in that time, in that time I have learned
    ▪ what a tremendous young man he is.
• He has a tremendous attitude,
  o a heart to serve God,
    ▪ and a willingness to be involved in ministry.
• I am thankful for his contributions
  o and look forward to what God is going to do
    ▪ with him in the future.

Autumn Wilson is graduating from Riverside High School.
• Autumn is a bright young lady
  o with tremendous opportunities before her.
• Not only has she completed High School
  o but she has also invested herself
    ▪ in the VoTech classes that were offered to her school.
• She will be starting the next step of her journey,
  o having already acquired valuable
    ▪ and marketable skills.
  o We are very proud of her
    ▪ and excited to see what God has in store for her life.

Rebeccah Gross is also graduating from Riverside High School.
• Rebeccah is a friendly young lady
  o with a great personality.
• She’s a newer face around here
  o and, while we don’t all know her as well
    ▪ as we would like to,
  o we do know that God has a perfect plan
    ▪ and purpose for her life
  o and we trust that he will be her constant companion
    ▪ as she embraces the next adventure
      • that God has for her.

Thank you, you may be seated.
• We have other guests here tonight,
  o including Taffy and her husband.
    ▪ It appears that their new family is expanding.
      • It is good to see that God is blessing them.

MESSAGE

I heard the story once of a preacher who took a shuttle flight early one morning to Chicago, to attend a meeting.
• The flight, however was delayed due to weather
  o and he arrived in Chicago late.
• Rushing from the concourse out to the curb
  o he jumped into the first taxi he could find
    ▪ and told the driver to drive as fast as he could.
• The cabbie took off like a bolt of lightening.
  o They raced out of the airport,
    ▪ through several intersections
      • and onto the freeway.
• The cabbie drove like it was the final lap of the Indy 500.
  o He was passing folks left and right
    ▪ and weaving in and out of traffic
      • like a mad man.
• After a moment the preacher
  o began to reflect on the where they were
  o and which direction they were headed
    ▪ and he said to the driver,
      • “Do you know where we are going?”
  o The driver’s reply was classic:
    ▪ “I have no idea!
    ▪ But wherever it is,
      • we are going to get there fast!”

That little story is a pretty fitting description of the way many folks live their lives.
• They are racing as fast as they can into their future
but they really have no idea where they are going.
  • But wherever it is,
    • they are going to get there fast!

Graduating is a momentous occasion.
• Tonight, as someone who has graduated several different times,
  o I know that there is something special
    • about this season of your life.
• It causes us to stop and reflect,
  o to consider where we have been
    • and to ponder where we are going.
• Tonight, I’d like to encourage each of our graduates
  o to take advantage of this moment.
    • Put the brakes on.
    • Slow down.
    • And carefully plan your next step.
      • You have options.
      • You have choices.

One of the things you will learn
• about this next phase of your life
  o is that life is defined by choices.
• You will be faced with them every day.
  o They come in all shapes and sizes:
    • How do you want your steak cooked?
    • Should you carry an umbrella today?
    • Who should you vote for?
    • Should you go to college?
    • Should you take this job or wait for a better chance?
    • Do you want ice cream?
    • Vanilla or chocolate?

Decisions surround you.
• We encounter them every day.
  o However, in the coming weeks and months
    • you will be faced with some
      • of the most important decisions
        • that you will ever make.
• You will choose your own path in life.
  o You will determine where you go from here
    • and how you will get there.
• As you get ready to make these important choices,
  o let me give you a little Biblical advice.
Seek God’s Will

- First of all, seek God’s will for your life.
  - Nothing is more important
    - than making sure that you are walking
      - in the way that he wants you to walk.
  - One of my wife’s favorite passages of scripture is:

Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

- The message translation puts it this way:

Trust God from the bottom of your heart;
don’t try to figure out everything on your own.
Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go;
he’s the one who will keep you on track.

- To acknowledge God in all your ways
  - is to seek his will
    - in every choice you make.
- If you will put God first,
  - if you will seek him in everything,
    - the end result of the choices you make
      - will be the life that he has planned for you.
- God’s will is not to be an afterthought in your life.
  - It is your primary pursuit.
    - It comes before everything else!
- If you will seek him first, he will take care of everything else.

Pray

- The greatest resource you have,
  - when you are faced with important choices
    - is prayer.
      - So, pray.
- Ask God what he wants for your life.
  - Ask him which direction you should go,
    - and don’t be surprised when he lets you know.

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Graduation Choices
• If you need direction,
  o before you ask anyone else,
    ▪ you should ask the one
      • who already knows the way.
• He knows the way you should go.
  o He knows the choice you should make.
    ▪ Ask for his guidance
      • before you seek any other guidance.

**Psalm 37:23** *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.*

• You know, on the face of it
  o the verse isn’t abundantly clear
    ▪ if good man delights in the way of the Lord
      • or if the Lord delights in the way of the good man.
• Personally, I believe it is true both ways.
  o The good man delights
    ▪ in finding the will of God in his life.
  o And God delights
    ▪ in seeing the good man walk in his ways!
• Either way the path to a delightful life lies in His way!
  o Seek the way of God,
    ▪ delight in it
      • and he will delight in you!

**Seek Wise Counsel**

• When you are faced with difficult decisions,
  o seek godly counsel.
• Don’t turn to your peer group for affirmation
  o when you are making a difficult
  o or life changing decision,
    ▪ turn to those that are wiser than you,
      • those that have walked this road before you.
• You may be an independent young man or young lady,
  o but the voice of your parents
  o and the voice of godly leaders in your life
    ▪ is still a valuable resource to you
      • when you are faced with difficult choices.

**Proverbs 1:5** *A wise man will hear and increase learning. And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel."*
**Proverbs 12:15** *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.*

- The best way to get to where you are going
  - is to talk with those
    - who have already been there.
- Don’t assume that the world has changed so much
  - that those older than you
    - are out of touch
  - with the choices you are making.
- The older you get
  - the more you will realize
    - that, as much as everything changes,
      - so many things remain the same.
- There is wisdom in the voice of counselors.
  - Seek them out.
- And while you are at it, seek out godly counsel too.
  - Allow the voice of your elders in the Lord
    - to speak into your life.
- The may not always understand the latest technology
  - or the newest ways of doing things,
    - but they do understand what it takes
      - to live a life that is pleasing to God.

**No Choice Is Final**

There is one final thing that I want you to remember.

- You will make some bad choices every now and then.
  - We all have.
- No mortal man has ever lived
  - that didn’t make a choice
    - that they later regretted.
- When that moment comes,
  - remember this,
    - it’s never too late to change your direction.
- It is your choice.
  - Just because you start walking
    - down the wrong path
      - doesn’t mean you have to stay there.
- Wrong paths can be changed.
  - It’s not always easy,
    - but it can be done.
- God specializes in second chances.
Never forget the story of the prodigal.

- He was in a bad place.
  - He got there by his own hand.
    - He made the choice.
- But when he finally came to his senses
  - and remembered his father’s house,
    - the same road that took him into the far country
      - was available to take him back home again.
- I’m sure the trip home was long and difficult,
  - and I know from experience
    - that changing directions in life
      - is not an easy thing.
        - But it can be done.
- With many miles behind him,
  - after a long a difficult journey,
    - the prodigal found himself
      - safe in his father’s embrace.
- I want you to know, you can always come home.
  - You can always change your direction.
    - This church will always be here for you.
- The family that is here with you tonight
  - will always be there for you.
- Don’t ever forget,
  - we love you
    - and we always will,
      - regardless of the choices you make!

**Prayer**

Would you pray with me?

**Dinner**

Ask the graduates to stand again and have them, along with their families to go first.