

**Graduation sermon for WCC  
Graduating and Growing in the Lord  
5-16-21**

For the next couple of weeks we are going to continue our pause of the book of Matthew and the Lord's Prayer. This coming Wednesday I will be speaking at the Baccalaureate at the high school and as I looked at what God had laid upon my heart I thought it would be good for all of us to hear. Plus I know there is at least one graduate here who is not from Wiggins.

For you grads from Wiggins and for the praise team, you will get to hear these same thoughts in a modified way on Wednesday night. Nothing wrong with repetition though right? But for this morning I have added a little bit more teaching for us for the reality is, as Christians of any age, we are always learning, surrendering and growing from glory to higher points of glory in the image of our Savior.

For some graduates from high school, tech schools and college, this summer is going to be a time of rest and a time of change. I believe for all of us this summer is going to be a time of rest and a time of change. It appears COVID is winding down, the mask mandates are being lifted and the number of vaccinations is high.

I think what we will see this summer is a lot of people moving around, traveling across the nation, into the mountains and other various places. Oversea travel is not really recommended yet but again, I think people feel the freedom to move about and they are ready.

The same is true for graduates. They are ready for some big changes in their lives. For some there will be a change of address, for others, it is a change of the way they have been experiencing school. Moving on to college and into the work force requires an extra level of discipline and a new learning curve. For the graduates and for all of us, wherever your journey takes you, the truth is you will always be learning.

I wanted to share a few thoughts this morning that I believe will help you do life well as you move forward. And to do this I wanted us to think about David of David and Goliath fame.

A lot of you know the story of David. I am really enjoying going through and teaching on the Psalms on Wednesday nights. In the Psalms, David writes about a lot of his experiences through life.

As a young man David was strong in spirit. When challenges came his way his one thought was to not to back off but to do what was in front of him and do it well.

When Goliath was taunting the armies of Israel, calling them out, David heard it and he said the following.

**1 Samuel 17:26b, “Then David spoke to the men... ‘Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?’”**

Two verses earlier we read that when all the men of Israel saw and heard Goliath taunting them, asking them to send a man out to do battle with him, they fled for they were greatly afraid. But not David. He was bold and confident.

**1 Samuel 17:37, “And David said, ‘The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’”**

David was bold and confident but not in himself. He was bold and confident in the Lord. Look at the what David told Goliath as he drew near to him.

**1 Samuel 17:45-47, “Then David said to the Philistine (Goliath), ‘You come to me with a sword, a spear and a javelin but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God is Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into my hands.’”**

David didn’t back down when faced with a giant but he didn’t run into the battle without some forethought either. He knew the ways of how men battle, using swords, spears or a javelin was not the right way, the way that he could be victorious.

As David was preparing to do battle, King Saul wanted to give David his armor and his sword but they were too cumbersome. They were tools of war for men but God wanted to do something unique. He wanted to use a young shepherd boy with only a sling and a rock to show everyone if you put your faith and trust in the God of the universe you will see His power and you will be victorious.

**1. David knew the battle belonged to the Lord and all he had to do was be a willing instrument, doing things God’s way**

That is a challenge for all of us isn’t it? When we are facing the battles that occur in our lives, the challenge is for us to step back away from what seems to us is the right way or the way the world says we should handle ourselves, but instead to seek out the Lord and ask Him how we should handle things.

David passed on using the swords and the armor of men and instead He choose God and His ways. The rest of the Israelite army and even Goliath made fun of little, young David. But you know what the result was. David killed Goliath with a simple stone and armies of the Philistines were defeated on that day.

Some of you graduates, and all of us, we all will face some pretty big giants in our future but the Bible tells that us, that we can do all things, even be a giant killer, if we put your faith and trust in God and follow His ways.

Not always easy to do, especially if you try and go at it alone.

As David continued to grow and mature, Saul named him leader of his armies. One of the things David did to help him keep his faith and trust in the Lord was he chose his friends carefully. He had 600 mighty men around him. But he also had a few men close to him. Men who would go into battle with him. Men who had his back when he was being attacked. Men who were even willing to die for him if need be.

Let me say this to you graduates and to all of us,

**2. Choose your friends carefully**

**1 Corinthians 15:33, “Bad company corrupts good character.”**

We are told that bad company corrupts good character. As you continue your journey in the years to come you will have to make some choices. The friends you choose to hang with will pull you along a good path or a more difficult path. Give this some forethought and intentionally pick those friends who will pull you in the right path, a godly path.

Another thing I believe is good for graduates and all of us is...

**3. Always look for ways to pay it back, pay it forward.**

**1 Peter 4:10, “As each one has received a special gift (from God), employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”**

When David finally became the king of Israel, he looked out for the people he was around, his family, friends and the entire nation of Israel. He never took his position as king for granted. He realized it was a gift from God and so he looked for ways that he could pay it back to the people.

The education you have received thus far was not free even though it was free to you. The education you have received was paid by your parents, your neighbors and a host of people you do not know. They paid their taxes, knowing they were providing each of you with an education. Since you have been given such a mighty and wonderful gift, look for ways to pay it back by serving others. Volunteer in your community and your church, helping those who are less fortunate than you are.

I would say this to each and every one of you. The life you have been given is a gift. How can you pay it back, pay it forward to someone less fortunate?

Another lesson we learn from David’s life is that he never raised his hand against those who did him wrong.

#### 4. Never **raise** your hand against those who do you wrong

**Colossians 3:13, “Bear with one another, and forgiving each other, who ever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you so also should you.”**

Time and time David’s life was threatened by the authorities that should have been protecting him. He was betrayed by his friends, family and the community at large but he never returned evil for evil.

When the troubles were over and the people settled down and decided it was okay for David to be their king, David did not take revenge, in fact he did the opposite. He welcomed them with open arms, blessed them and provided for them.

Let me encourage you to do the same. When you are wronged, don't seek revenge. Let God take care of it and as you do, you will be greatly blessed.

All of these attitudes and actions of David could not be accomplished though without a strong faith in His God. So I say to you, develop your faith in God and He will never leave you or forsake you.

A more current, public and familiar example of these Godly values is Tim Tebow. I am so glad that Tim Tebow is back in the news again.

### **Tim Tebow slide**

Most of these lessons I just spoke about Tim Tebow learned over the course of his career. Some look at Tim Tebow and see how he failed as a quarterback in the NFL.

Tim Tebow never saw that. After playing for the University of Florida, winning two championships and the Heisman Trophy. Then being drafted by the Broncos, it looked like his future was set. But you know more than most that is not have things fell. His path took a different direction.

He became the catalyst of a lot of media attention which was focused upon his faith in God. Millions of people have been stirred to look into the Bible at John 3:16 and we will only know how many came to Christ through his witness. His dreams of becoming NFL quarterback ended. He took a lot of criticism playing baseball for two years with the NY Mets minor league team.

But one thing you never heard from him in all this is was a complaint or negative remark about those who criticized him. He is blessed and has used this blessing to set up numerous foundations to help those who are less fortunate than him.

A number of us have been involved with Night to Shine. A non-profit organization that Tim Tebow and others set up to make a special night for individuals who face unique mental challenges. This ministry has grown, hosting 700 events throughout the world.

And guess what is happening with Tim Tebow? He might be back in the NFL, this time as a tight end with the Jacksonville Jaguars. It is a very real possibility that he is signing a one year contract and some are saying that he will be successful because he is a very good athlete and he knows football. Of course there is a lot of naysayers as well.

But it doesn't matter to Tim Tebow because he is having fun and doing things his way and God's way. He has used his public platform to glorify God and again, to have fun. Has it been easy? No. But like David, Tim decided to develop some core values that would carry him through the good times and through the hard times.

Let me encourage to think about David, think about Tim Tebow and how they lived their lives. They certainly were and are not perfect but they asked for forgiveness, brushed themselves off and moved on.

They each cultivated strong godly friendships, God being the strongest. They paid back their blessed life, paid it forward by serving others. And they strove never to return evil for evil. If you do these things you will be successful in your journey of life.

Again I say to the...

**To the graduates and to all Christians, congratulations on your journey thus far in education and in your relationship with the Lord and may God bless you and guide as you move on from here.**

Amen?