

Class of 2013, believe it or not, high school is over! We will never again sit as a class in those less than comfortable bleachers for hours on end during Worldview week, Spiritual Emphasis week, Chapel, pep rallies, assemblies, basketball or volleyball games. We will never again all have similar classes, teachers, complaints, concerns, assignments, and projects. This is where our paths diverge. Some of us are going to traditional four year universities. Some of us are going to community colleges to get those pesky gen eds out of the way. Some of us are going straight into the workforce. Some of us have sixteen years of schooling before we enter the workforce. Some of us are entering into the armed forces. And some of us are taking the path not yet figured out.

But even though we all have a different path before us, the world seems to assume the same thing from all of us. The world expects us to change the world. Those younger than us look up to us as leaders in this revolution. Those older than us see us as youngin's with the energy to fuel this revolution. But how do we see ourselves? I think if we're really honest with ourselves, we find ourselves somewhere in between, or in other words, nowhere. We would love to be leaders, but we don't feel like leaders, we feel too immature, too young for that. It still hasn't REALLY hit me that I'm legally an adult. We would love to be the driving force, but we don't know where to start.

Because like children, world-changing doesn't come with a step by step instruction manual. The fact of the matter is, changing the world is a big, scary task. And the real fact of the matter is, God never called us to be world-changers, at least not directly; He called us to be life-changers. He didn't commission us to go forth and start revolutions, but to go forth and make disciples. The world will change when the people change. That was Jesus' model during His short three year ministry. He changed the world forever, not by orchestrating rallies or marches, but by healing and loving individuals. In order for us to be life-changers, we will have to be honest, open, and bold.

Many people have said (or sang in the case of Michael Jackson) that in order to change the world we must start by changing ourselves. I'm sorry, but I don't think this self-change tactic really works. Because I've tried changing myself, and it doesn't really work out too well. And think about it, if we could change ourselves, why would we need Jesus? Granted, we cannot change lives without first being changed ourselves, but this change does not come from our own strength. It comes from surrendering our lives to God and allowing Him to change us.

In order to allow God to change us, we will have to do something that even Adam and Eve struggled with, we will have to be honest with our all-knowing, all-seeing God. We will have to show Him our good, our bad, our ugly, our messy, our insecure, our scared, our happy, our sad, our painful, our pleasurable, and everything in between. We will have to tell Him how we feel even if that means telling Him that we're angry with Him. When we let go, Jesus fills us and gives us what we need to go out and change lives and the world.

But this is not a one man show. As *High School Musical* so eloquently puts it, we're all in this together. God did not create us for doing life alone. After all, Adam's loneliness is the only thing that God calls "not good" in the entirety of the Creation story. And even Jesus got by with a little help from His friends. But in order for us to truly take advantage of the support of our fellow believers we must be open with each other. We must rid ourselves of what Casting Crowns calls the "stained glass masquerade." We must allow ourselves to be broken in the presence of others. We must expose our struggles with sin, doubt, and trials to our brothers and sisters. Because when we are vulnerable to others, we often find that what we thought was our own unique struggle is really a common or universal struggle. Through this realization we find other believers to fight with us and for us, so that we can go out unhindered into our mission field.

As we enter our mission field, it is important to remember that faith is spelled “R-I-S-K.” Being a life-changer means being willing to stick your neck out just for the chance to influence someone’s life. It means having to accept delayed gratification, because on average it takes someone 7 “touches” before they will say yes to Jesus. It means showing God’s love in practical ways through service. It means being willing to say the 7 words that can change the world in any and all circumstances, “Can I pray for you right now?”

So graduates, as you go forth changing lives, remember that God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness; He succeeds in our failures; and His favorite people are the broken ones. It’s been an honor and a privilege doing life with you guys for the last ten years. Thank you.