

Κατανόωμεν **Let us consider...**

The Grace Classical Academy Class of 2016

This quarter's newsletter is dedicated to the class of 2016: Annie Epler, Jackson Frazier, Blake O'Dell, Katie Sparks, and Lauren York. We will begin with profiles of each senior, and conclude with Mr. Bradley's graduation address.

Annie Epler:

Annie's first year at GCA was her sophomore year. She plans to attend College of the Ozarks in the fall and possibly pursue a degree in public relations and business. Afterwards, Annie hopes to be a wife and mother and wants to impact the political world for God. She says,



"I would love to be involved in helping to get Godly people into more important and impactful roles in leading our great country.

When asked about some of the experiences she is most grateful for, Annie recounted, "There are many experiences I am grateful for, but the one that sticks out to me the most is question day in 11th grade debate: we had question days on Fridays with Mr. Cymbaluk and I learned so much from just that once a week class. It was so interesting and we talked about topics I had never even thought about before."

Annie, we are grateful that you have been a part of our school for the last three years and we look forward to what God will do with your life!



The mission of Grace Classical Academy is to provide an education designed to help our children know the love, grace, truth and holiness of our glorious God and, from this understanding, strive for excellence in knowledge, wisdom and service.

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**Let the word of
Christ dwell in
you richly,
teaching and
admonishing
one another in
all wisdom,
singing psalms
and hymns and
spiritual
songs, with
thankfulness in
your hearts to
God.**

**Colossians
3:16 (ESV)**

Jackson Frazier:

Jackson began at GCA in kindergarten, and is one of many Fraziers who have graduated from GCA. Jackson plans to attend Missouri State after GCA, and he sees in his future “a whole lot of hard work. Success doesn’t necessarily depend on your degree and college of choice, it depends more on making things happen, seizing opportunities, being a go-getter. That’s just the kind of student I’m working toward becoming every day.”



Jackson also has some advice for upcoming GCA junior high and high schoolers: “There will be so many opportunities opening in the near future. But, these opportunities are garbage if you ignore them because you never know what you’ll find. Therefore, study God’s Word; find your passion; make mistakes; try new experiences; put yourself outside your comfort zone. (My biggest mistake was thinking that my classmates judged me for my mistakes: they didn’t even remember them.)”

Jackson, we love you and we wish you the best!

Blake O’Dell:

Blake joined GCA in 6th grade. Upon graduation, she plans to attend Missouri State and become a nurse (possibly in the NICU) but one day plans to be a wife and mother. One of the most formative experiences for Blake has been the opportunity to teach 6th Grade Latin this school year. She says, “Getting to teach 6th Grade Latin has been such an amazing



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experience that I will forever be grateful for. It has taught me so much about myself and the Lord. I have deeply loved my students, and God showed me that the love I have for them is only a fraction of the love He has for us.”

Blake is also thankful for having Mrs. V as a teacher: “I would say that Mrs. Vandiver has impacted my life the most. Even though she is no longer with us, I am constantly reminded of her sweet and gentle spirit. She was such a beautiful person whose life was always pointing people back to Christ. She had this way of inspiring others to pursue Christ. If she noticed sin in your life, she would tell you but in the most loving way.”

Finally, Blake made a list of advice she would offer to the next wave of GCA students:

1. Love the Lord above all else.
2. Love your classmates and schoolmates well.
3. GCA is a one of a kind place—don’t take it for granted.
4. There will be moments (aka senior year) where you feel overwhelmed with the future. You will probably contemplate moving to Bora Bora and becoming a mermaid. Just kidding—kind of— but it is in those moments that you have to step out in faith and let the Lord lead you where He wants you to be. And as terrifying as this is, realize that it is also a beautiful picture of God’s grace.
5. Remember that the God we serve today is the same God that led His people to the promised land. He has always been faithful and always will be.
6. Your teachers are there because they genuinely love you. Take advantage of that and truly get to know them. They are awesome and such good examples of what it looks like to follow the Lord.
7. Ask Mr. Bradley to tell you stories, because his are the best.

Blake, we can say that it has been truly wonderful to have you as a student at GCA. We pray that God would use you in great ways!

Katie Sparks:

Katie came to GCA in 10th grade, the same year as Annie. Katie has not made up her mind on the specifics of what she wants to do upon graduation, but history, ecology, and criminology are all fields she finds interesting to study. She does have a big picture goal for what she wants for her career: “I don’t really know for sure what career I want to go into—something adventurous where I can use my brain and still make things with my hands. I do know that in ten years I will be doing something to help people and to show them the love that God has for everyone.”

When asked about what she is most grateful for as a student at GCA, Katie said: “The experience I am most grateful for is rather a group of experiences—question day in my favorite class, 11th grade debate. In all seriousness, 11th grade was a crucial turning point in my life emotionally and spiritually. I felt that God had betrayed me and that I could not forgive Him. There were hundreds of questions that people all around me simply took for granted, but I could no longer ignore them, such as: is God really all-loving? I was mad and hurt and up to my chin in doubt. I finally couldn’t keep it all



bottled up anymore, so I began to ask Mr. Cymbaluk some of my questions. Through this, he established the “ten-minutes-of-questions” day every Friday in debate class. More often than not, it became “entire-class-period-of-questions” day. He avoided answering most questions directly (though there were some that he addressed thoroughly when he felt it was necessary), but instead directed the class to discovering answers on their own by asking us questions and giving us Bible passages to look up. This is probably the only way that I would have actually listened to anyone, because I am one of the most stubborn people I know and don’t take well to being preached at. For these reasons, I learned more about God in that one year than I ever could have on my own. For that, I am eternally grateful. I can see now that God knew exactly what needed to happen and stuck me in Mr. C’s debate class for that very purpose.

Katie, it has been a great joy to have you at GCA as both a student and a teacher. May God bless you and keep you!.

Lauren York:

Lauren joined GCA in 2nd grade. She has enrolled at Evangel University to pursue a BA in youth ministries. In the future, she plans to obtain her master’s degree, get married, and be involved in full-time ministry (either in America or internationally). But, knowing that God can change people’s plans, Lauren says, “No matter what really happens, I want to be living fully in the will of God for my life.”

Some of teachers from GCA who have most influenced Lauren have been Mrs. Vandiver, Mrs. Pratt, Mr. C, and Mrs. Harrison. Lauren explained, “Whether they knew it or not, these people showed me how to love, to be thoughtful, to wonder, to think for myself with Biblical truth and reason as my guide, to worship, to encourage and extend grace, and to love myself and others. In other words, they helped me to be a whole-hearted Christ follower, not just someone who does ‘Christian’ things.”



One experience Lauren is most grateful for is the Socrates unit in 9th grade history (Ancient History). She recalls that, “During this time, we investigated big questions that people don’t often think twice about. These conversations got me thinking about what habits and beliefs in my life needed to go so I could have deeper intimacy with God and live life more founded on truth. It was mostly due to these class times that I committed my life to following Jesus!

Lauren, your love for God and others is clear to anyone who spends time with you. May God bless you on your journey!

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 36:7 ESV)

Graduation Address

For years, Mr. Bradley has been mentioned repeatedly by seniors as someone who has impacted them deeply in their time at GCA. His address to the students this year at graduation gave each of us who heard it a small glimpse as to why that is. Thank you, Mr. Bradley, for your love of God, your love of learning, and your love for your students.



Annie, Blake, Katie, Lauren and Jackson: I cannot begin to tell you how honored I am to have been asked to speak tonight on the occasion of your graduation. You may have heard: people say I'm a talker. I am not going to be brief.

I had a really hard time preparing for this. I wrote and rewrote and rewrote again. All I could come up with was a pile of timeworn clichés to the effect that the future is in your hands and the torch is being passed. I was boring myself as I was writing it. So, I talked to a lot of people and asked them what I should talk about, and what I got were good answers that didn't suit me. This is after all the only commencement address I have ever given and the only one I am ever likely to give. I want to get it right. So, I decided to pray about it.

I came away from prayer thinking that I should tell you a story. You always seem to like stories. But I want to make it a good one, because this may be the last story I will ever have a chance to tell you.

So, I'm going to tell you my story (in very abbreviated form). I was born, as I'm sure I must have mentioned to you before, in 1954. Things were so much different then. The America I remember from my childhood was strong and united; economically and militarily, we were a powerful nation and a proud people but—I think very significantly—we were humble enough—and wise enough—to remember our God on a regular basis. In school, we prayed every morning. On Sundays, we got up early, put on the very best clothes we had, and went to church. I remember that women used to dress so nicely for church; they looked like modest fashion models. Men wore suits with tie and hat. Looking back, I think things in general took a definite turn for the worse around the time men stopped wearing hats.

Back then, everybody had their little house in the suburbs. Mom stayed home and baked cookies and put supper on the table at 6:30 every evening; dad went out and worked. Children ran around the neighborhood laughing and playing, unwatched and unattended but in perfect safety. It seems very quaint today, and I can't tell you how much I miss it.

Whenever I now attempt any comment of the "kids these days" variety, my daughter, Yumeko, is quick to remind me that it was my generation that ruined the country. That's a little harsh, but there is some truth in what she says. My parents' generation endured the Great Depression, won the Second World War, and built the strongest economy the world has ever seen. There's a reason they call them the Greatest Generation. They gave us, their children, the world on a silver platter and we responded to their generosity by growing our hair long, burning our draft cards, smoking pot and going to Woodstock. Such is the arrogance of youth. We, the boomers, never bothered to think that collectively we were breaking our parents' hearts—or that they, of all people, deserved better.

At the end of my own idyllic childhood, I left the church. That was in 1972, when I was precisely the same age as you are now. I had my reasons, but that's another story. For 28 years, I was effectively unchurched. I was never an

atheist or even an agnostic. I just made a conscious decision not to worry about it.

I will not lie now and tell you that every day of my almost three decades away from the church was angst and drudgery with my soul in torment. No. I went places, met people and did things. Hobbies and relationships sustained me. I was in the military, bouncing back and forth between Asia and Europe every few years. I had endless opportunities to travel cheaply, and I took full advantage of those opportunities.

Life seemed good but somewhere around the age of 25 or so, it started to ring a bit hollow. I began to feel dissatisfied for what I believed at the time to be no good reason. I began to suffer from insomnia. I got a little grouchy. I can recall feeling as if I was waiting for life to get to the point.

Whenever I would pause and take an inventory of my life, it always seemed like I just had to be doing OK. I had friends. I had a decent job. I wasn't rich but I had enough money—I was young and single with no bills to speak of—I was living overseas—I had a Harley—at one point, I had two—I had people, stuff and a little bit of money. What I did not have was a purpose. If someone had put a gun to my head and said, "Jim Bradley, what does it mean to you to be alive?" I would have been hard pressed to answer. I did not have a purpose. What I did have was a nagging feeling that the days of my life were slipping away.

I started to read a lot—not the Bible—I would have seen that at the time as akin to admitting defeat. I read Montaigne and Freud and Mann and Orwell. I read literally everything Hemingway wrote right down to his letters. I binge read Fitzgerald and Chandler and a dozen others. I read Shakespeare—all of Shakespeare—the plays, the sonnets—everything. I was looking for the meaning of life in good books. It wasn't there. Literature is not life. There is no road that leads from Hemingway to heaven; if you try to live an examined life by the light of any book except the Bible, you're stoking a fire with wet wood. It took me an embarrassingly long time to come around to that.

That's how the years passed. I went more places. I was more bored. I met more people. I was lonelier. The depth had gone out of everything. I was living a flat life and I could not find a way to get the snap back.

And then along came Mrs. Bradley—she bae, can't even—amazing woman—love at first sight—and we got married and had children and I was swamped by change and responsibility. It was overwhelming. It was wonderful.

In 2000, my father, whom I had seen only rarely over the years, was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer. By the time they found it, he had only a few months to live. I and my wife and children flew from Baltimore to Little Rock to be with him as he passed. About an hour before my father died, three of the elders from the congregation that he and my mother attended came by the hospital to say their goodbyes and to ask him the big question, "Is there anything you need to talk about?" I remember with such clarity, how my father looked at them as if they had asked him the most foolish thing ever and, in a voice that was remarkably firm for a man minutes from death, he replied, "I know in whom I have believed."

And I have to tell you, that was the right thing to say; it was the right time and the right place. As those words left my father's lips, God reached down from Heaven, into that sick room, and touched my soul. I doubt that not one bit. I felt as if some strong man had physically slapped me in the face. I was palpably shaken. I don't know to this day how I kept on my feet or didn't scream or cry out. It was the single most electrifying thing I have ever experienced. It was there and gone but it was enough because, in just that moment, I came back home to the church. And I can tell you today with surety that God lives. That is not something that I simply believe—it is not a matter of faith—I know that God lives.

I know too that this evening is not about me. Rumors to the contrary aside, I am not that vain. I wanted to tell you my story in order to get to precisely this point and say a particular thing to you that I really want to say. It's prosaic; it's probably been said to you a hundred times before, but let me say it to you now. Children, please listen carefully and understand that I know of what I speak when I say: you will not find happiness in this world if you lose

your faith.

And I can almost hear you saying, “Mr. Bradley. Don’t worry. That will never happen.” I hope so. I pray so. But do an old man a favor; guard your hearts oh-so-carefully in this coming year. This is a dangerous time. 18 is when so many young people walk away. You leave home and your friends scatter to the four winds. You find yourself alone and face to face with the real world. You feel lonely. You feel abandoned. That is the tempter’s snare. Be wise and do not neglect the best friend you will ever have. Rather, be in prayer with Him whose name you bear. You literally cannot be alone; when you took on the name of Christ, you left solitude behind.

Look around this room; look at all these people who came to see you walk across this stage tonight. They could have used this hour for something else but they wanted to be here to say goodbye and wish you well. I don’t think there is a person in this room whose help you could not rely on if ever you found yourself alone and in difficulty. Just because you’re graduating, doesn’t mean we’re done. You remember that.

To finish my story: after some to-ing and fro-ing I wound up here. I first came to Grace Classical Academy in, if memory serves, May of 2006. Mr. Barnhouse had kindly arranged for me to have an interview with Mr. Vandiver and it went well enough. He invited me to sit in on some classes here and see if the school might be a good fit from my end—and I did.

I sat in on Mr. Bowman’s 8th grade logic class and a wonderful thing happened. I heard students talking to each other between classes and the conversations that they were having were very different from those that I had become accustomed to hearing in public school. I heard students here talking about home and family and church. I saw young men treating young women with respect, and I knew right away that this was the school I wanted my daughter to attend. I heard children quoting scripture to each other and challenging each other to live according to the Word of God, and I came to understand pretty quickly that this was a school that I could happily be a part of.

It still took me about a year after I started working to come to terms with the level of commitment that is in play here at GCA. I kept thinking it had to be some sort of prep school in disguise and it’s not. I got to know the Vandivers better and found that they were almost alarmingly uncompromising in their faith—and they were about classical, God-honoring education down to the bone.

I don’t want to lionize the Vandivers, but at the same time I think I owe them a debt which I may have never publicly acknowledged. Now is as good a time as any. The Vandivers were something I very much needed to see at that point in my life: visibly Jesus-centered Christian people who seemed to be of that old-time kind of religion that is so not around much anymore—more’s the pity. There was an integrity about them that invited affection and commanded respect. I can’t say that the Vandivers reminded me of my grandparents, but they did remind me of my grandparent’s church. I’m sorry if the reference is obscure but, believe me, those are words of high praise. In any case, the Vandivers were very patient with me, a kindness which I will always remember.

I began to read my Bible more here at GCA. I began to pray more. I began to pray in a better way and for better things. I prayed that God would help me to become a better person and a better Christian.

And there came a morning when I woke up and I was positively eager to get out the door and go to work and I realized to my great surprise that I had out and out fallen in love with this little school of ours. It offends my native

“...my father looked at them as if they had asked him the most foolish thing ever and, in a voice that was remarkably firm for a man minutes from death, he replied, “I know in whom I have believed.”

stoicism, even today, to speak these words aloud. I am not an emotional guy. I am stony. That aside, I have believed now for ten years that Grace Classical Academy is, at the very least, the best school in Springfield. I would like to say it's the best school anywhere but I lack a sufficient basis for comparison to make that a defensible statement.

I don't know how we'll be doing five years from now—nothing good seems to last in this benighted age. How do we start in the red every year and finish in the black? How did we survive the Great Recession when at least 400 classical Christian schools did not? I think that the answer is simple: God loves this school. So do I.

I know you're all still halfway up in the air about which college to go to and what to do with your life. Let me help you. Here's how you figure all that out—and pay attention because this is me preaching and that's something I almost never do—but here's the plan: find a dark quiet place; fall on your face before God; pray like you mean it; pray until your ego shrivels within you—that may take a while—ego rarely goes gently into the good night—be patient; remain in prayer—I promise you as your teacher, friend and brother in Christ, a moment of clarity will come. When God knows that you are entirely at His disposal, He will answer your prayer. He's not trying to keep the purpose of your life a secret. He will tell you the answer when you grow the ears to hear it. When the only thing left in your heart, mind and soul is "Here am I; send me," God will make known to you what He wants you to do with your life.

I may be preaching to the choir tonight, badly. I know you are not heathens who have never known the Lord. You have walked with Him thus far in life. You have professed His name before men. You have eaten bread and drunk wine in remembrance of Him. I only ask you to be mindful of the fact that, because you have done these things, there is now only one skin that will ever fit you. There is no happy path for you that does not follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Let me charge you tonight, while I still can: be ferocious Christians. This old world of ours cannot abide even one more generation of weak-kneed Christians. Be warriors for this marvelous thing that you believe. So much has already slipped away because of our timidity. Be a little confrontational.

Here's an idea. Be a hero. Be the next William Lloyd Garrison. Be David Livingstone. Be Sophie Scholl. Everything else is just a day job. The Apostle Paul was a tent repairman. I have no doubt he was a good one, but do we remember him today for his cutting-edge work in the field of tent repair? Or, do we remember him as a pugnacious, energetic apostle who through pain and danger and humiliation, planted churches, evangelized, and penned letters to errant churches that guide us still today? The thing that will chart the course of your life is not your diploma. It is your heart for Christ. Small heart; small life. Big heart—all things become possible.

I have often prayed that God will raise up one generation so faithful that it will own the Great Commission. That could be you. The possibility is there in a way that it has never been there before, because you are the first generation in history that is actually comfortable with thinking globally. Those phones you carry around with you everywhere and to which you are seemingly surgically attached can transmit in a heartbeat anything you want to say or show, anywhere around the globe. That's new. That's good. Utilize that. You definitely have something worth saying. Say it. Text it. Tweet it. Facebook it. Snapchat it. Google-plus it. Put it on You Tube where even I can find it. Find your way to talk to the world about Jesus.

There was a time when the Gospel thundered and the world changed. The Gospel is a whisper now. I beg of you—for the sake of the God we serve and the world we love, teach us old folks how to thunder again. Show us what you're made of.

I know you call me "Dr. Dystopia," but I hope you do so ironically and affectionately; I have never told you the world is a dark and threatening place. I wouldn't do that. If I gave you that impression, that's my bad. If the world is getting darker, it is only at the fringes. The world on the whole remains a bright, engaging, lovely place full of decent, friendly, interesting people. You could learn a lot from the world. I have no doubt you will. But remember too, that the world is fallen and lost. It's a dichotomy. You're going to have to get used to those. In life and the world, they

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are ubiquitous.

People may be decent, friendly and interesting—and even happy—and still be lost. Salvation is not about being nice or happy or positive or what have you. Salvation is about accepting Jesus Christ as your savior. Happiness apart from Him is possible, but the happiness of the unbeliever is so fragile, it's paper thin. A passing breeze can snatch it away.

You are blessed to know a joy that nothing can touch—because God is a rock within you. Keep that. Remember that. Share that. Don't be shy. Don't get tongue-tied. Don't be embarrassed. Share the gospel with unsaved people at every opportunity. Don't be discouraged by the fact that most of them—almost all of them—will not listen. Some will—and then what friends you'll have in Heaven.

A few years from now when those big pay checks start coming in, have a care how you spend your millions. The sin I see most thoroughly addressed in the Bible is greed. Jesus said to the apostles, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" That is a troubling statement because, in case you haven't noticed, we live in a insanely rich country. We are all rich.

In 2002, I spent \$4,000 on a hunting trip to South Africa. I thought at the time it would be money well-spent and, in a sense, it was. I shot a kudu and camped in the bush and stuff like that—it was all very Hemingway-esque and I won't lie and say I didn't enjoy it.

But at one point, we took a short cut through a village and there, squatting in the dust, was that archetypical, starving, naked African child with the swollen belly and the fly-encrusted face that you see in the commercials for the relief organizations on television. As many of you here tonight already know, it's different when it's not TV and the child is there, looking back at you.

My game guide told me that people around there survived on the equivalent of a dollar a day. The ones who didn't survive were the ones who didn't have the dollar. And it occurred to me that I could have fed, clothed and probably housed that half-dead child at my feet for ten years for the same amount of money I was spending to shoot an exotic variety of deer. I have never before or since felt like such a fool. And then, the land rover we had been waiting on came roaring up and we climbed in and off we went and I never saw that child again, except in my mind's eye. I see him there a lot. He kind of won't go away.

If you recall, there was a thing we covered in economics called "opportunity cost." It means the value of the other thing you could have done with the money you spent on the thing you just bought. Like, you can buy one cheeseburger or two ice cream cones, so the opportunity cost of the cheeseburger is two ice cream cones and vice versa. I'm not telling you it's wrong to go on safari or to buy nice cars or bass boats or to have a summer house in the Poconos. I suppose it's not inherently wrong to be a billionaire.

You can decide that for yourself. Read your Bible. What I am saying to you is: "Remember the poor." Remember that one day you will look God in the face. Count the opportunity cost.

When my daughter was a student here, I used to tell her every morning before she went off to class, "Remember who you are." Obviously, I say that to say this: I hope you too will remember who you are. You are children of a good God, good parents and a good nation. I would call that a good start. So, if you mess up after this, it's on you.

Annie: You surprised me. You're a patriot. I did not know you very well before this year. I didn't know you

cared so much about this country of ours which, let's face it, has maybe seen better days. I wish that the America I am handing to you was as deserving of loyalty as the one my parents handed to me. But you know, citizenship is a marriage of sorts: it is more about bonds of affection than the current state of affairs. You take the good with the bad. I myself never had much use for sunshine patriots. Give me Americans who love the nation for the sake of what she was and what she might be again and not just for what she has to offer at the moment.

Annie, you are a fine young Christian woman, but for some reason, it is your patriotism that really was so apparent to me this year. It's not something I see a whole lot of anymore. I thank you for your faithfulness. You give an old veteran hope.

Blake: Ladies and gentlemen—Blake O'Dell is the sweetest human being I have run across in a month of Sundays. I'm ashamed to say that, on a cold morning when my arthritis is acting up, I can get a little cranky. I am at that stage of life where my knees are beginning to make a nuisance of themselves. I also sometimes complain about being fat, as if that were something that had been done to me instead of something I had done to myself. I do not suffer these things in silence. I'm a whiner.

When I moan about being old and fat, Blake always rallies around and tells me forcefully that I am not old and I am not fat even though—as you can plainly see, I am guilty as charged. It's still nice to be told that I am not even though I know I am. It's a delusion under which I would gladly labor could I but achieve the necessary suspension of disbelief (I cannot). Blake, I know I'm fat, because I jiggle when I walk and I know I am old because I can count. But thanks for trying.

I have seen you for years now, here at this school, seasoning other people's lives with your own peculiar, native positivity. I wonder sometimes if you even realize what a blessing you have been and continue to be. You seem to have a million friends. I wonder why? Blake, you're just a little sunbeam. You keep shining. I miss you already.

Katie: The stamp of the arts is on you, as plain as day. I think you might live that "life of the mind" that we all talked about from time to time in CP Writing and elsewhere. It doesn't always pay well, but a life of thought and discernment is nonetheless a very good life. Culture pays in its own coin.

A word of caution: don't let talent make you proud. God gives us each the gifts that suit us best. That's all. I can write a pretty decent essay but you should see me try and play basketball. They tell me it's hilarious.

You told me once that you were interested in studying History—and then on another occasion said that you *might* want to be a teacher. So, if I put those two things together, you could actually wind up being a history teacher. Wow. That is aiming high. That is an ambition worthy of Caesar. Teaching is the noblest of the professions (although, I should warn you, it turns out, it is another one of those things that doesn't pay so well). Mammon aside, you would make a remarkably good teacher.

Lauren: I suspect you will be either a missionary or a missionary's wife. That's my call. Unless I completely misread you, you love Jesus from the top of your head to the tips of your toes and you intend to do something about it. I think you are one of those rare Christians who read the great commission and understand that "ye" means "me."

I have a sinking feeling that "ye" means "all of us" but most of us won't go because it's hard and it's dangerous. Also, it's really comfy here. Good food. Clean water. Central heating. Basic cable. Who's going to give that up to go live in some dusty mountain village in Peru? If those people want to know about Jesus, they can google Him. That's what civilized people do. Let them eat cake.

What I am saying to you is "remember the poor." Remember that one day you will look God in the face. Count the opportunity cost.

Lauren, you are not lazy. You are not a coward. I doubt that comfort is very high on your list of priorities. I have learned at least that much about you. Please don't let anything stop you from doing what the Lord is obviously calling you to do.

Isaiah tells us, *"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"*

And then there's Jackson. It's a funny thing about you Frazier kids. You're all tall and you all have your heads screwed on right. How did that happen? Jackson, you are a very bright young man. You are admirably firm in your faith. And, you are chock full of ideas about what you want to do with your life. You will go far. I'd bet my government pension check on it. I actually think—I am not just saying this—that you can quite literally do anything you want to do. My only warning would be: don't settle for doing something you don't really want to do. Don't exchange passion for security.

I very much appreciate the fact that you can take a joke. I hope I didn't make too many at your expense, but it certainly helped the time go by. I have had two of your brothers and a sister or two in my classes before you. I saw your parents' imprint on them and I see it on you.

Just so you know, when for reasons we need not go into, Yumeko and I decided it was time to leave our previous congregation and look for a new roost, we immediately thought of Christ the King Chapel because of the respect we have for your family. It's always good to have a Frazier in class. You keep me honest. Also, when I lose the remote control for the overhead projector, you can turn it on without having to stand on a chair.

Seriously, if I had had at your age one tenth the imagination and enthusiasm that you display, I might have made something of myself.

Annie, Blake, Katie, Lauren and Jackson: This is my final piece of advice to each of you. It's a bit of parenting advice. And yes, you need it, because when people tell you that you will be through college, working and married with children, before you know it, they speak the truth. That sound you hear is life shifting into high gear.

When your own children are still very little and they begin to speak simple words and understand simple language, you teach them Jesus Christ and Him crucified: they'll turn out alright. But take care to teach them sensibly. Don't teach them to be afraid of the world. Teach them to love it. If you build walls around them, if you make the faith a prison, they will flee at the first opportunity.

And with that, it's time to say goodbye. I will follow your future careers with great interest. I refuse to think of you ever as "former students." I will continue to think of you as I always have: my little brother and little sisters in Christ. Our time of fellowship and learning passed very pleasantly from my end; I won't presume to speak for you.

For me, this school will always be the house that Mrs. V built. I hope you wear that well. Pause in your revels, now and then, and have a thought for the people who helped make you who you are.

And now this is me, on behalf of all the old people in the Church, passing that torch that I said I wasn't going to talk about. I lied. You take it—and do as we say and not as we have done. Go forth now and share your blessings with the world. Vote. Get involved. Care. Raise your Ebenezer. Fight the fights we did not. Learn from our mistakes and be better than we were. Build a church that your children will not desert.

It's perhaps a little sinful of me but I can't help being just a tad envious—I am green with envy—when I think of all the things that lie ahead of you. 18 and going off to college—throw me in that briar patch. Travel and adventure and love and marriage and career—and all of it new as a penny. I hope you go out there and set the world on fire. Paris waits for you. Hemingway's words, that I quoted to you so often, still ring true: "The world is a fine place and worth fighting for." I pray that each and every one of you will have a wonderful life. May God bless and keep you always.



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- 1 Tuition Due
- 1-3 Office Closed
- 15 Mrs. McDowell's Birthday
- 16 Mrs. Morris' Birthday
- 19 Father's Day

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- 1 Tuition Due
- 4-5 Independence Day—Office Closed
- 13 Mrs. Cymbaluk's Birthday

August 2016

- 1 Tuition Due
- 1-9 Teacher Training
- 8 Orientation, 6 PM
- 10 First Day of School
- 19 Evening Prayer for GCA, 7 PM
- 26 Camo Day