

Graduate Send-off
First Church Westfield
June 16, 2019
Rev. Julie G. Olmsted
Scripture: Psalm 8, Philippians 4:7-8

1) Distinguish between the Trendy and the Eternal

Truth is eternal, never trendy. Fashions come and go; ways of worship, terms of slang, hairstyles, music, all this stuff is fun at best and shocking at worst. But the eternal transcends what's trendy. What is eternal? Galatians 5:22 (Fruit of the Spirit): Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control

2) Don't Blame, Ignite the Flame

Many people find infinite ways to blame others for their shortcomings and their failures. It can become a lifelong habit that keeps you from growing, becoming wise, and worst of all, finding happiness. The world hungers for people who say honestly and forthrightly: I did it. I'm sorry. You can count on me to never do that again. It's golden and it's rare. Be the person who demonstrates this and you will become a beacon to the world. Also, don't forget, don't blame yourself for everything, either. Taking responsibility is not the same as feeling guilty and wrong. Guilt should be fleeting, not chronic!

3) Cut the Cord but Not the Tie that Binds

You want to be on your own, I know. You want to travel, perhaps, do some things you've never done, go some places you've never gone. You want to do what you want, not be told what to do. That makes total sense. Go places. Experiment. Kick up your heels. But don't forget where you came from. Your family, your church, your teachers and your community, they "birthed" who you are, in a sense. They will always be there for you; don't tear the fabric of your relationships. Don't break the "tie that binds." No one truly goes it alone. That's a fairy tale and it's a very lonely life. These ties, they are lifelong and they are fundamental to your well-being and your identity. Find ways to forgive your parents, for whatever they did or didn't do. Overlook their flaws and consciously decide to love them and respect them. God will reward you in so many ways.

4) Get High, Stay High

No, not high on drugs, high-mindedness. Cultivate taking the high road. In Psalm 8 we read that God made us just a little lower than the angels. You want to gain the respect of your peers, have a great job, take on leadership that will really make a difference? Have integrity, speak on behalf of those less fortunate, take care of others, especially your parents. See what happens. You will be considered an angel. You will go far. Most importantly, you will be happy. Happiness doesn't come from doing nothing, "hanging out," having no responsibility or just doing what you want to do when you want to. Happiness comes from taking on responsibility, caring for others, keeping your

word. The sooner anyone gets this, the farther they will go in life. Think your way to joy and peace, happiness and success. This is what we can learn from Paul's letter to the Philippians: Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think on these things. When you think, as well as when you speak, you are creating. Create beautifully, love whole-heartedly, sing and dance with abandon. You are so very, very loved.