

Do. Love. Walk.

Micah 6:8

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The theme for Passport Kids last Summer was Do. Love. Walk and was based on the text that was read earlier from Micah 6:8. Do justice. Love Kindness. Walk humbly with your God. As we gather together to celebrate our graduating class of 2018, these words came to mind as a reminder for them as they enter the next chapter in their lives. Before we dive into the text, let me first take you way, way back - all the way back to the year 2007.

I was part of the graduating class of 2007 at Bob Jones High School in Madison, Alabama. I graduated with an Advanced Diploma, which really just meant I took honors classes and a few language classes. My graduating class was 604 students and while most of my classmates were eager to get out of Mad town Madison and head to Auburn, Alabama or some other far away university, I was content to stay in town and go to the University of Alabama in Huntsville. While many of my classmates couldn't decide on a major, I did. I was focusing on a degree in Management Information Systems. I had it all figured out. MIS was a fast growing degree and the income was good. Two years into my degree, I decided this wasn't for me. A summer at camp in North Carolina happened that changed my whole perspective on life. You have heard that story before, but as I look back, that God moment was a step in the right direction. It was a step towards doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God. What I learned during my time in college was that my future was less about what I thought I wanted and more about seeking what God already had planned for me. I believe that when we seek God's will it will lead us to opportunities to Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk humbly with our God. So, Ali, Connor and Charmain, as you enter this next chapter in life, one that will be full of adventure and excitement, one that will be scary at times and will be perfectly imperfect, ask yourself what the Lord requires of you in this next part of your life.

Let me offer a few suggestions to help you navigate this next chapter in your story. What this world is hungry for, what this world desperately needs is authenticity. This world needs authentic people. Be yourself and be proud of who you are. Don't seek perfection but seek humility and authenticity. Who has God called you to be? What strengths has God given you? What opportunities has God

given you to strengthen your weaknesses? When we walk humbly with our God, these opportunities become known to us. How are we walking with God? Like a ship in the ocean without an anchor, we are either floating to a destination or floating away but never standing still. This is like our relationship with Christ, we are either walking towards Christ or drifting away but never standing still. How do you walk humbly with your God?

A young man from a wealthy family was about to graduate from high school. It was a custom in their affluent community for parents to give their graduating children a new car, and the boy and his dad had spent weeks visiting one dealership after another. The week before graduation they found the perfect car. They boy was certain it would be in the driveway on graduation night.

One the eve of his graduation, however, his father handed him a small package wrapped in colorful paper. The Father said the package contained the most valuable gift the Father could think of. It was a Bible! The boy was so angry he threw the Bible down and stormed out of the house. He and his father never saw each other again.

Several years later the news of the father's death finally brought the son home again. Following the funeral, he sat alone one evening, going through his father's possessions that he was to inherit when he came across the Bible his dad had given him. Overwhelmed by grief, he brushed away the dust and cracked it open for the first time. When he did, a cashier's check dated the day of his high school graduation fell into his lap --in the exact amount of the car they had chosen together. The gift had been there all along but he had turned away. The most valuable gift the Lord has given us is the word of God. The only way we can learn to live with all of the pressure, problems, and perplexities of life is to learn how to live in the word of God. Live in the Word. Study it and live it. To walk humbly with our God requires us to live in the Word.

Do justice and love kindness. There are many hurts in this world. We can't fix them all, but we are given opportunities to play a role in the healing of the hurts of this world. Where are you called to Do Justice and Love Kindness? Not when you finish school, not when you have ample time, not when it is convenient for you but now, where are you called to serve now. God can use you now. So seek those opportunities. Foster care has provide me a opportunity to do justice and love kindness, but it also reminds me that I can't fix all the hurts that come with the brokenness. This is important to remember. When we trust and are faithful, God will take us to some broken places. Pray that God will break your heart for what

breaks Gods, but do so with the understanding that it will be tough and will require an immense sacrifice. Don't be concerned with how little or how much you have but trust that what you do have is more than enough.

One of the things I that I found important to remember as I began the college journey was to find community. Find a good Christian community but find a community of peers that will lift you up, that will support you and that will love you. When I think of the word Church, I think of community. We are not called to walk this journey alone, so find community wherever you go. As you have grown up, there may have been people in your lives that have changed you, that have shaped you. There will be people that will come into your lives that will shape you and change you for the good. Seek these people out and welcome them into your journey.

Let me offer one last word, don't be afraid to fail. Embrace risk because when we are doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God, God is faithful and God is good. After three summers of working as a counselor at a summer camp in North Carolina, I was offered a Program Director position on the other side of the country. I didn't take it because I was afraid of the risk and failure. Looking back, I regret not taking that leap, but God still provided opportunities to be faithful. After serving 4 years at a church that my grandparents helped start, I took a risk and leaped into the unknown by moving "all the way across town" to serve at a church called Weatherly Heights Baptist. We all know how that turned out. Seek risk and embrace risk because the opportunities that God calls us to will be out of our comfort level and maybe even a little crazy, but that is the requirement to be faithful.

I am proud of each of our graduates and look forward to seeing what great things you will do. Your future is bright and we as a church are proud of who you have become and what great opportunities are on your horizon. Graduating class of 2018, may you seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God. Amen.