



"He who does not refer everything to eternity is never likely to live either well or happily in time."

—Adam Clarke

**11-May-07**

## **Commencement 2007**

The news this morning is that today is Graduation Day at Virginia Tech, and the reporters covering the story are probing just how different this day will be from other commencement exercises in years past. Though only a handful of the victims of the April 16 mass murder would have graduated this year, the university is planning to honor the 27 student victims with posthumous degrees, and class rings will be given to their families. Security will be a primary concern for attendees.

However, many other universities, colleges, and high schools will be graduating millions of students over the course of the next month. These young people will be "commencing" their adult lives, beginning new careers, starting families, and launching out into a world of both opportunity and danger. Yet, the graduating members of the class of 2007 need more than a pep talk to prompt their charge onto the field of their future endeavors—they need a sober, eye-opening vision of reality. Thus:

Congratulations, graduates! You are to be commended for fulfilling the requirements of the degree program in your chosen area of study. All those late nights of cramming have paid off! You have accomplished a worthy goal.

However, despite the thousands of dollars you and/or your parents have paid for this slip of parchment, despite the midnight oil you probably burned from time to time, despite the mounds of pizza boxes and cans of Red Bull you likely added to our nation's landfills, despite the ill health you may have suffered as a result, you must let go of much of what you learned and experienced in this institution of learning and start from scratch.

That may seem rather harsh and to diminish what you have accomplished—and it may be a bit of hyperbole—but it reflects cold reality. Your modern, cutting-edge, progressive education is not really worth all that much over the long haul. Sure, it will probably help you to land a job, and the technical skills and the raw facts you learned will be of some benefit in that job, but just about everything else has been fairly worthless.

Now, I can see that you are either shocked or unbelieving, and that is to be expected. You have been taught not to accept this at my say-so. Nevertheless, should we ever meet again, say forty years down the line, I hope that you will let me know whether I was right or not. Perhaps by that time we will both be wise enough to have realized the whole truth about life.

Today is Commencement Day, and that means "the day of beginning." Everything up to now has been preparation for beginning adult life with the tools to succeed in it. You have been taught facts, figures, skills, techniques, perspectives, and methodologies. By graduating, you have proven to your teachers that you have a passable grasp on the subjects they have taught you.

But this is America 2007. Our public schools and most of our colleges and universities are entirely secular in philosophy. They

are a hodge-podge of ideas and theories and assumptions, and 99 percent of them have their origins in the minds of men. Your professors and teachers have fed you a load of humanism from kindergarten to your final exam before this momentous day of achievement. What you have learned, then, is as finite and as flawed as humanity itself. Man's knowledge and ideas can reach only as high as man and no farther. Alone, mankind cannot break through the glass ceiling of his own limitations.

Sadly, your education has not prepared you for life. It may have prepared you for a job, but life? Hardly. Is life a job? What a poor life that would be! Life is not a career, a skill, a profession, or any kind of way of making a living. Yet, that is all a secular education can provide. It does not have the stature to go beyond material knowledge, beyond the skills of mind or hand.

As others have noted, the schools of this nation have closed, locked, and barred the door to the one Person who could teach this truly "higher learning." Of course, I am speaking of [God](#) Himself. The apostle Paul informs us that the natural man apart from God can only know the things of men—physical, material, technical knowledge. If we desire to know truly useful and eternal things—knowledge, understanding, and [wisdom](#) about the "big questions" of life—they have to be revealed by God through His Spirit. Otherwise, the answers to those "big questions" remain sealed between the covers of a closed Book.

Can I let you in on a secret? We call this a "commencement," and think of it as the end of a period of preparation for life—and it is. But the truth is that all of life is a time of preparation; we are preparing for real, eternal life. What we do in this life readies us for everlasting life as children of God in His Kingdom. Our experiences, beliefs, and practices will shape our characters and forge our destinies beyond this mortal coil.

If God is beginning to work with us, this knowledge should begin to rearrange our thinking and reprioritize our goals. Suddenly, a sheepskin diploma does not possess the value it may have had just

minutes ago. It has its own worth, a material importance, but it pales beside the value of things like a relationship with God, a loving spouse, a close family, personal integrity, [self-control](#), a sterling reputation, and a sound mind. These are the bones of real life, and the diploma and the job are merely means to put food on the table, clothes in the closet, and a roof over our heads.

With these thoughts in mind, we can leave here with new resolution to begin preparing for life. Yes, you heard me right. This commencement is just the end of the first semester, as it were, in our lives of education and preparation for real life. If we study hard, do our exercises, and pass our tests, true commencement will take place on some future day when we hear the great Chancellor of the Universe say in the hearing of all, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Much of our judgment hinges on what we do with our families. The role of the father includes the continuous process of instructing, correcting, and chastening children, with the ultimate objective of preparing them for a profitable role in God's Kingdom. The role of the mother is linked in partnership to the father's role working in unity rather than at cross purposes or on independent agendas. The mother provides a gentle, cherishing quality to child rearing compatible with the strength provided by her husband. Proverbs 31 provides a detailed analysis of the virtuous woman's role at making the household run smoothly for the good of the family, honoring the covenant relationship with God and her family.

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

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