**15873, Eugene Jackson**

Good morning Everyone,

I want to welcome all of you to our youth fellowship breakfast today. You know that I have always done my best to encourage each and every one of you in all that you do. Regardless of what you do or where you go from here I want you to remember that You Are Somebody. You are important just as you are. Your importance doesn’t come from your intelligence, or your skills, or your talents, or the things you choose to do or not do. You are important just because you are you.

Most of you have known me throughout your teen years. We have worked together and talked about a great many subjects, some personal, some work related, and some volunteer related. We’ve discussed your futures and your pasts and your hopes and desires. I want to encourage you that you have great futures ahead of you.

Some of you will go to college while others will go to work a job when you finish high school. Some of you will start out doing one thing, maybe try more than one and finally settle into what you love. But, no matter what you do while you’re a teenager or what you do when you reach adulthood, it is my hope that you will throw your entire self into it. I guarantee you the results will be more than worth your effort.

Because I know all of you, I know that you have great potential. You are all very young. Your potential has barely been tapped. You all have so much in store for you, some of which is even available to you now, some of it will come much later. No matter what field’s you pursue I know that you will be able to accomplish great things. Don’t ever let anyone plant seeds of doubt within you.

I have never met a more compassionate and thoughtful group of young people. During the time I have known you I have witnessed your willingness to reach out and help your peers as well as your elders. I have witnessed you reaching out to those close to you and people you’ve just met. Your concern was the same. With the coldness and lack of care we see in the world today, your love for your fellow man is amazing. No one needs to make you plan events to help your fellow man, you come up with ideas on your own.

You have so many opportunities to grow and to learn while you are still young. I want to encourage you to look for those opportunities and use them to grow and learn. Your capacity to learn is so much greater than you can imagine. You have talents hidden within you that you haven’t even discovered yet. But, I promise you they will become apparent as you take each opportunity and use it to the fullest.

It is unfortunate that each of us must face challenges in our lives. Some of those challenges may be very personal failures. Do not allow even the most personal challenge or failure to diminish your belief in yourself. It is during those times of challenge that we must look within ourselves to find our greater strength. I promise you that you have that inner strength. It just won’t show itself until the time it is needed. I have watched each of you meet the challenges you have had thus far so I know that there is so much more deep within you.

One thing I want to impress upon you is to dream big for your accomplishments will never exceed your dreams. Don’t let anyone tell you that you have to temper your dreams for any reason. If you want to accomplish big things then you must dream big things. Don’t let insecurity cause you to shy away from those dreams. You have no reason to be insecure. If you are going to achieve your dreams you must have confidence in yourself to do so. Then, your self-confidence will draw others to you to help reach your goals. I know you can do whatever you set your minds to do.

What is it you want to do with your life? What do you want to accomplish? Have you thought about it much? Do you have any idea what you want to accomplish? If you don’t have any dreams or goals now, begin to think about it. Do you want to own a big company? Do you want to be a politician? Do you want to be a religious leader or social worker? Or are you thinking of something more creative such as a musician, an artist, or maybe even a best-selling author or public speaker. Any of these are possibilities if you willing to put in the time and effort to learn the tasks and you are committed to doing whatever is necessary to meet the requirements.

I know some people who started just where you are now. Today, because of persistence and hard work, they are professional musicians, authors, CEO’s, politicians, etc. Some of them experienced delays along the way from life challenges. They experienced their own challenges but they learned that anything worth doing was worth doing to the best of their ability. So, every single day they put their feet on the floor, got dressed and met the day. They went to work and faced whatever challenge the day presented to them. Whenever you have doubts about yourself or your choices, find someone who stands today where you want to stand in the future. Watch and learn from them. Maybe even approach them to ask questions such as “how did you accomplish this or that?” Some may not be helpful. But most people who have had to overcome great adversity to accomplish an important goal are very happy to help others to find their niche and their schedule. Just keep telling yourself, “I can do this.” “I’ve got this.”

Discouragement can do a lot of damage, even in miniscule doses. Don’t allow it to take route. Silence it whenever it tries to speak to you. If you are a person of faith, then when discouragement challenges you, repeat your statement of faith and your statements of affirmation over and over. If you are not a person of faith, the find a variety of verbal affirmations to play in your ear while you step on out and accomplish what you set out to do. But, whatever you do, don’t allow the discouragement of others to stop you. There will always be some people who won’t want you to succeed. You can’t let them get into your head. You have to silence those voices, but you also have to replace them with voices of encouragement. I won’t always be standing by your side to affirm or encourage you, so you have to learn how to affirm and encourage yourselves.

It doesn’t take a genius to make a great mark or great legacy in the world. There are plenty of geniuses who have accomplished little to nothing in their lives. There are also plenty of people of ordinary intelligence who have accomplished more than you could possibly imagine. What’s the difference you ask? The difference is that the people of ordinary intelligence were more persistent, more determined, and more committed to meeting their goals and seeing their dreams come true. Tenacity is a personality trait that will serve you throughout your lives. It will see you through the toughest of times. Whether or not you realize it, I see that trait in all of you. I have watched you use it to accomplish some pretty awesome things in the years I’ve known you.

I look out on this crowd today and I see our future. I see a group of young adults and teens who will be our future leaders, our future care givers, our future politicians, and our future business and community leaders. Remember, being a leader doesn’t mean you have to be in charge or have a title. Being a leader means you lead by example and you do so without expecting recompense. You simply do what is the right thing to do because it is the right thing to do.

The kind of leadership that you exhibit will be responsible for mentoring and teaching the generation that comes after you. You will do so because it comes naturally to you. You know what it is to need guidance and direction so you will offer that to those who come after you. Knowing what kind of leaders you will grow into give me such hope for our future. I am honored to know you and to have taught and mentored you.

I want to thank you for inviting me here today to speak affirmation and hope into your lives. It is something that I try to do anyway, but to be able to do so when you are gathered together. You are all awesome. Go out from here today and change the world as only you can do.