**Alridge Speech [EZ Speech No. 16206]**

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Remarks by Terrance Alridge at the 2017 Senior Celebration of the Academy for Success.

**[INTRODUCTION – 4.5 mins]**

ladies and gentlemen . . . faculty and staff . . . distin­guished guests . . . graduating seniors and parents . . .

welcome to the senior ceremony for the 2017 gradu-ating class of the academy for success. i feel enormously privileged to be able to address you this [morning/afternoon/evening]. as most of you probably know, i’ve been principle here for just a little more than [no.] months now, and i must tell you, the welcome i received from the faculty, the student body, and the wonderful community of parents who’ve entrusted their children’s education to us was truly heart-warming. i feel not only privileged to be standing here, but deeply blessed as well.

now, it’s traditonal for graduation-day speakers to couch their remarks along the lines of “advice-to-the graduates-on-how-to-live-a-good-and-productive-life.” Well, when i was thinking about exactly what gems of wisdom ***i*** ought to impart to you seniors this [m/a/e], it occurred to me that — if i could identify any one, *single* key to living a good life — it would simply be to foster and nurture and manifest in all things and in all ways an *attitude of gratitude.*

not one of us gets through this life on our own. throughout our days, we’re helped along the way by our parents, our teachers, our church, our friends, and by the many mentors who’ve given us guidance and counsel through the years. we can achieve little on our own. i don’t care how smart you are, or clever, or diligent, you’re always going to need the help and support of others to achieve your goals in life. and for this, you’re going to “owe” them.

and how do you repay this debt? it’s simple. just say “thank you” — or better yet, “thank you; I’m very grateful.” it’s not good enough simply to *feel* grateful. no. you’ve got to *express* that gratitude out loud, and most importantly, you’ve got to *mean* it. you’ve got to make sure that anyone who helps you in any way, large or small, knows that you sincerely appreciate their effort or their help. from the cashier at mcdonald’s to the math teacher who took the extra time to explain quadratic equations when you just couldn’t wrap your mind around the subject, you need to say “thank you” from the heart.

now, i’m pretty sure that, for most of you, your parents are the people to whom you owe the greatest debt of gratitude. think of all the things they’ve done for you. think of the sacrifices they might have had to make to send you to such a wonderful center of learning as the academy for success think of all the love and care they’ve lavished upon you from the moment of your birth to this special moment in time. are you thinking . . . ? are you feeling it . . . ? good! now i’d like all you seniors in the audience and all their parents to please stand up.

[after they’ve done so] good! now seniors: i want you to hug your parents and tell them “thank you.” [as they do so] ah . . . that’s so beautiful! you can sit down now, thank you.

so to sum up, seniors, here’s my advice: take a sincere attitude of gratitute, combine it with the golden rule, and you’ve got the perfect formula for living a good and happy and successful life.

[make your introductions here.]

**[close – 1.5 mins]**

thank you very much, [name of student speaker], what a terrific job! before we get to really fun part of these festivities, i just want to say to all of our graduating seniors that i hope the academy has given you the tools and confidence you’ll need to succeed in whatever profession or career you choose. I hope we’ve encouraged you to always seek truth, to be loyal to your friends, and to be grateful for all that’s given to you. With these tools, and with an unshakable faith in yourselves, i urge you to stuff your faces silly at this evening’s banquet . . . and then go out and change the world! and on this noble mission, i wish you all good sailing, and god’s speed!

now, let’s go eat!

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