**Harris Speech [EZ Speech No. 16248]**

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Valedictory speech by Ms. Christy Harris to the 2017 graduating class of the Greenville Christian Academy.

ladies and gentlemen . . . faculty and staff . . . distin­guished guests . . . fellow graduates and parents . . .

i am both honored and humbled to have been invited to give the valedictorian’s address at this year’s graduation ceremonies.

when i was pondering what i’d say here this [morning/ afternoon/evening], it occurred to me that the first thing i should say is, “thank you.” For if there’s one thing I’ve learned in my [no.] years at greenville chrisitian it is that one of the most important aspects of living a good life is to foster and nurture and manifest in all things and in all ways an *attitude of gratitude.*

my experience at greenville christian has taught me that none 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. we’re always going to need the help and support of others to achieve your goals in life. and for this, we’re going to “owe” them.

and how do we repay this debt? it’s simple. just say “thank you,” or better yet, “thank you; I’m very grateful.” however, it’s not good enough simply to *feel* grateful. no. you’ve got to *express* that gratitude straight 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 them, you need to say “thank you” from the heart. as it is said in *thesslonians* 5:18: *“give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God.”* you will find that an attitude of gratitude is one of the most attractive and endearing traits you can manifest.

now, i’m pretty sure that, for most of us, our parents are the people to whom we owe the greatest debt of gratitude. think of all the things they’ve done for us. think of the sacrifices they might have had to make to send us to such a wonderful center of learning as greenville christian. think of all the love and care they’ve lavished upon us from the moment of our. so on behalf of all us graduating seniors to all you wonderful, supportive parents out there: thank you, *thank you*, ***thank you!***

there’s another important lesson I’ve learned here at school and that is that procrastination is the enemy of progress — absolutely deadly. if you don’t believe me, just try putting together a 60-slide powerpoint presentation in less than 48 hours like I had to do for mr. anyes’ bible class back in [year]. that’s the last time i waited til the last minute to do anything!

but perhaps the *single* most meaningful life lesson i’ll take away from my time here at greenville christian is that I was put on this earth for two purposes and two purposes only: the first is to praise god, and the second is to help others.

the most important and noble purpose we have on this earth, while we’re down here, is to relieve the suffering of others, to help others realize their full potential, to give care and succor to those who are in pain, to raise others out of despair and into joy. *this* is the secret of living a meaningful life. *this* is what it means truly to be a christian. as *philippians* verses 2 thru 4 urges us: *“do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves.”*

so the two-part secret to living a successful life is to — first — develop a genuine attitude of gratitude within yourself, then manifest that gratitude openly and freely; and then — second — to live a life of service and helpfullness to others. nothing could be simpler, right?

now i know that many of my classmates might soon find themselves wandering away from church and away from their christian community. Some of you might stop going to church altogether. but whatever method of prayer and worship you might follow once you’ve left here, my hope and my prayer for all of us is that we’ll never, ever let jesus out of our hearts . . . that we’ll continue to live a life of service and righteousness . . . and that, as christian leaders, businessmen and businesswomen, missionaries, doctors, pastors, or whatever profession we might choose for ourselves, we’ll go out and — with god by our side — change the world!

thank you.

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