



[Comment Home \(/comment/\)](#) / [Reviews & Opinions \(/comment/archives/reviewsopinions\)](#)

[A Letter to my Daughter, Upon her Graduation from Christian School \(/comment/article/3251/a-letter-to-my-daughter-upon-her-graduation-from-christian-school\)](#)

Most importantly, we wanted you to learn the truth about you: not the unplanned product of a purposeless universe, but the masterwork of the majestic Creator, with intrinsic and incalculable worth regardless of your GPA, your earning power, or your place in the social pecking order.

May 11, 2012 - By [Glenn Oeland \(/contributors/goeland/\)](#)

Dear Katie,

Graduation Day at last! Congratulations! Bravo! Well done! Hurrah! Wahooooo! I'm so filled with love and pride right now I'm about to burst. Many times I've come into your room late at night and found you toiling over algebraic equations, or struggling to plumb the depths of Dostoyevsky, or trying to think clearly and Christianly about the big questions of life. I commend you, my dear daughter, for being faithful to your calling as a student these past twelve years. You've been a delight to me—well, most days—and I am deeply grateful to God for entrusting so precious a gift to so imperfect a parent.

As you celebrate this joyous day, I urge you not to forget all the people who built this school—from the visionaries who founded it in borrowed rooms at church, to the teachers who've given you high standards of study, character, and service.

I think of dear Mrs. B, your first grade teacher. What a saint she was, radiating the love and joy of Jesus despite being crammed into a tiny classroom with 16 squirming six-year-olds. Remember her ancient guitar, the one she called Old Glory? I'm sure you'll never forget her lilting arrangement of 2 Timothy 3:16—"All scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness." That chorus sounded the keynote for your education.

Then I remember fourth grade, and the move from the church to the beautiful new campus. Remember walking into those bright, spacious classrooms for the first time? What a gift it has been to me—and to you, I hope—to see what God can do when his people join together in faith, prayer, sacrificial giving, and hard work.

But enough about me. What are *you* feeling on this momentous day? Elation, I'm sure. And relief. And maybe a twinge of anxiety about your future. I've shared this with you before, but it's worth repeating, even memorizing: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and

not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). This is not, of course, the kind of *carte blanche* promise the prosperity preachers make it out to be, but I think you already understand that. For twelve years you've been learning how to accurately understand and faithfully apply the Bible. You know religious snake oil when you smell it.

I suspect you also know the main reason your mother and I decided to enroll you in Christian school in the first place: to give you the opportunity to gain a life-transforming grasp of God's truth. When the body of Christ is ignorant about the Bible, it becomes feeble, and no Christian can grow up strong in the faith without a diet rich in Holy Scripture. We also wanted you to come to see all God's world through the lens of God's word, and to understand the relevance of Jesus Christ to every subject of study.

Most importantly, perhaps, we wanted you to learn the truth about you: that you are not the unplanned product of a purposeless universe, the random offspring of time, chance, and biochemistry. You are instead the masterwork of the majestic Creator, the Divine Artist whose mind and imagination infuses the cosmos with meaning, order, and beauty. As an image bearer of this infinite, personal God, you have intrinsic and incalculable worth, regardless of your GPA, your earning power, or your place in the social pecking order.

And never forget that the truest measure of your worth is the price Christ paid to liberate you from sin and selfishness and bring you into a love relationship with your Heavenly Father. The King of Glory has paid your ransom and adopted you into his royal family. As you launch out into the next season of life, I pray that you will hold fast to your true identity and destiny.

I don't have to remind you, of course, that some of the students and professors you'll meet at college will urge you to grow up and stop clinging to comforting myths and infantile fairy tales. Hasn't science shown us the cold, hard facts about the universe and our place in it? Likewise, the story of Christianity, as you'll hear it told in some classes, is a shameful chapter of Western history that brought us the Dark Ages, the Crusades, and the Salem witch trials.

Faced with such assaults on their beliefs—combined with the temptations of the campus hook-up culture—it's little wonder that the faith of many young Christians flatlines during their college years. I don't pretend that you will be immune to the challenges and temptations, but at least you'll not be going into battle without essential training and equipment. Your study of apologetics, church history, and ethics has informed and fortified your faith, and I know you will be a strong ally in the struggle to win hearts and minds.

I'm aware that Christian school hasn't always been a church picnic, and there have been times when you've missed some of the perks of public school. And we've all felt the financial pinch—*squeeze* might be the better term—of paying private school tuition. The trip to Disney we never made, the pets we couldn't afford, the bigger house, the newer car—I hope you'll remember these as good things we gave up to gain something much better.

And if, in God's good providence, you eventually marry and become a mother, please remember this as well: *All* education is religious education. Place a child in an environment where God is never mentioned, and what will she conclude? Either God isn't real, or he's irrelevant. Either way, the

conclusion is that he can safely be ignored.

But you know, and I know, that ignoring God has profound consequences for how we think, feel, and act. The opposite is true as well. I'm greatly heartened by **research** (<http://www.carduseducationsurvey.com>) showing that graduates of Protestant Christian schools are more generous with their time and money, are less likely to divorce, are more committed to their churches and communities, and possess greater hope and optimism about the future than alumni of other schools. By my accounting, that's a good return on investment.

And I can't help but note in passing that the good accrues not only to Christian school graduates, their families, and their churches, but also to society at large. As you learned when you studied our country's history, democracy depends on the cultivation of virtuous citizens. Christian schools are making an important contribution to that cause.

Finally, I'll remind you that to whom much is given, much is expected. Jesus calls us to be salt and light, preventing moral decay and dispelling the darkness in the world. So how can you make a difference at this stage of your life? Thanks for asking.

You might start by reading *Do Hard Things* by Alex and Brett Harris. It's full of inspiring stories of young people who are taking action to change their corners of the world. Christian thinkers such as James Davison Hunter and Andy Crouch have also written probing books examining how Christians can best bring their influence to bear for the greater good of society. While only the most gifted among us will ascend to the commanding heights of culture, we can all pursue our callings with passion and excellence. We can learn to write and speak clearly and persuasively. We can spend less of our time and energy chasing empty prosperity and devote more of our lives and resources pursuing the Kingdom. We can ask Christ to give us his vision of the good life and replace our misguided measures of blessedness with his beatitudes.

Katie, my dear Katie, I know you want to live a life pleasing to Christ your Lord. I am so grateful for all that God has done, and is doing, and will do, in and through you. And so I'll sign off for now with St. Paul's words to the Christ-followers in Philippi: "For I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

I love you.

Dad



Glenn Oeland (<http://www.cardus.ca/contributors/goeland/>)

Glenn Oeland is a writer and editor based in Washington, D.C. ... *read more »*

(<http://www.cardus.ca/contributors/goeland/>)

(<http://www.cardus.ca/contributors/goeland/>)

Posted in **Education** (</topics/education/>), **Loves** (</topics/loves/>), **Parenting** (</topics/parenting/>)

. Linked to Cardus' **Education and Culture** (</research/education>) research project.

This article has been printed from www.cardus.ca | © Copyright 1974-2011 Cardus. All rights reserved.