

EMERGING INDEPENDENCE (FOR YOUTH)

With graduation behind them, many of our youth and young adults will begin to embark upon a new journey in life—spreading their wings as they **emerge into independence**. Some will go on to institutions of higher learning, others will become part of the workforce, and some will join the military, but no matter what, each has one thing in common: *a future that is bright and theirs for the taking*.

That future does not come without hard work, prayer, planning and, sometimes, disappointments. Some of us have made ‘adulthood’ look easy to our children. We have worked hard to conceal our mistakes, pain and disappointments and, in the process, made our journey look effortless to our children. Too often we send them out into the world to make their own way without preparing them for the hardships and struggles that got us to the place we ultimately call ‘success’! In other words, sometimes we don’t prepare them to face the realities of life! What a disservice we unknowingly do when we don’t share the pain, process and path that got us to our product.

We want and expect our young people to *emerge into independence*, hoping that we have done our part to help shape the foundation for their success. Most of us have given them the basics: we’ve raised them in church, involved them in extracurricular activities, supported them academically and rooted for them as they engaged in sports activities. At this point, we are praying that the groundwork we’ve laid for them can sustain them through the difficulties, disappointments and pain they will undoubtedly encounter. John 6:33 also tries to prepare us with this warning, “...*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,*” (NKJ). It’s important that we remind them of this caveat, as we guide them into adulthood. When our youth go out into the world, we must gird them up with love, confidence and prayer, so that when trouble and trials come, they are strong enough to withstand the pressures of life. They need to know that emerging independently requires getting back up and getting back in—*even if they don’t feel like it!*

Graduation and emerging independence is a celebratory time, so while my intent is certainly not to forecast doom and gloom, it is to help ensure that our next generation has received a healthy and vital dose of reality. Whether they go far or stay close to home, there will be times when they will make decisions and choices, independent of us and certainly apart from the way they were raised—*just as most of us did!* It’s okay to make mistakes or missteps—they help us grow and mature. The problem occurs when we fail to learn from those mistakes.

At Grove, we are hosting “**A Life or Death Moment**” on July 19th and 20th. It is my prayer that this event—or our accompanying “More Life Experience” for youth that will be held on July 19th, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. —will present adults and graduates alike with an opportunity to choose LIFE, and make choices that will help them seek the life that Christ desires for each of us.

Growing up and becoming independent is a rite of passage that each young person should relish as he or she emerges into their independence. I encourage our young people to seize the future with zeal and great expectation. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't achieve your dreams. *Go for it!* The sky is the limit when you work hard, and put in the time and effort to pursue your goals, but know this: *vision without execution is just a dream.* In other words, you can dream all you want, but if you don't take the time, make a plan and work the plan, you will never achieve your goals.

The world we are leaving our future generation is unlike anything many of us could ever have envisioned. For example, the high schoolers that are graduating in 2017 have always been able to plug into USB ports; and because of GPS, they have never needed directions to get anywhere—*just an address.* Phones have never been just phones to them; they've always had phones with multiple uses, such as a camera and internet access. They've never known a world without online shopping, and there's a good chance they have never bought a new CD.

Youth and young adults today are wiser, smarter and more tolerate. They are not afraid to ask questions in a world where most of us grew up believing that 'children are to be seen, not heard.' Some start 'coding' as young as three and four years old. We only need to look at a recent event where dozens of global leaders mobilized to try to stop a devastating ransom ware hack, while a 22-year-old was able to stop this worldwide cyber attack by registering a domain for \$10.69!

To all the young people who are emerging into independence, here are a few timeless tips to keep in mind as you turn the page on your next chapter.

Be careful of the things to which you allow yourself to be exposed. Those things that we see, hear and that our minds process, sometimes stick with us far longer than we can imagine. Romans 12:2 reminds us "*not to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind....*" Renewing of the mind occurs when we rid it of some of the worldly things we encounter.

Don't expect others to validate you. Christ loves you dearly. Remember Ephesians 2:10: "*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*"

Don't waste time worrying about things that are out of your control. The Bible tells us in Philippians 4:6: "*Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything....*"

Don't expect man (or woman) to do what only God can. There's a reason He tells us in Isaiah 54:5 "*For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth.*"

Think long-term, not short-term. In your 40s, you will barely remember those things that seemed SO important to you in your 20s. "*Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding.*" (Job 12:12)

People will come and go in life, but those who truly love you, will never leave.

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. His opinion matters more than anyone else’s does.” (Hebrews 13:5).

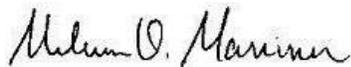
The younger you are, the sharper your mind and memory. Store as much as you can of God's Word in your mind and heart now—so you can retrieve more later. *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:11)*

Develop wise financial habits now. They will serve you well in the future and provide you with a safety net as you get older. *“Do not be one who shakes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you.” (Proverbs 22:26-27)*

Purity is in rare commodity. Regardless of what you see on social media, righteousness never goes out of style. *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)*

Remember to join us for **“A Life or Death Moment”** on July 19th and 20th and congratulations, graduates, as you emerge into independence!

Peace and power,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melvin O. Marriner".

Dr. Melvin O. Marriner
Senior Pastor Grove Church