

Paul H. Dixon: Thank you, Doug. Doug, one of our very fine graduates from this last June's class now traveling for the college along with Vinny Jackery recruiting students out in the Christian high schools and churches and we thank the Lord for their ministry. I bring greetings to all of you who are here from the First Baptist Church in Medina, Ohio. Had a very fine ministry there yesterday. Thank the Lord for public decisions in both services. In fact, I got in I think somewhere around 12:15, 12:30 and they had called and said that a man had come back into the service and said that he wanted to be saved. After the service was over, he was in the service, and one of our graduates had the joy of leading him to Christ so we thank the Lord for that. Pastor Max Deffenbaugh is doing a terrific job there. They have a new church, about three years old, 20 acres, a Christian school, it's growing. I think we had 480 in attendance yesterday doing a job of reaching their community for Christ, and let's continue to pray for all of our local churches.

It's exciting to be able to be a part of this special presentation today of the 100,000th volume in the library. I appreciate so much the leadership of Lynn Brock, the work of all of his people. We gave them a special plaque in the faculty meeting on Friday in recognition of this milestone. And I want to say that administratively we are committed to endeavoring to provide the needed facilities and doing all that we can even in a greater way improve the quality of the library. We know what an important part this is of our work at Cedarville College. God's giving us such an excellent quarter, and as it comes to a close I want to commend you as a student body for your spirit, and the attitude, and all that you're doing to contribute to making this such a fine quarter.

I do from time to time think it necessary that we remind ourselves of some things. I think most of you know that one of the main underpinnings of what we endeavor to do, relative to our standards at Cedarville College, is to make a distinction between biblical mandate and a personal preference. I have a firm conviction that within fundamentalism when you take a personal preference such as a hair touching a man's ear, slacks, and things like that, and begin to teach that that's a biblical mandate. One evangelist is going around the country saying that if a man's hair touches his ear then he can't hear God when he speaks to him. He connects a number of passages that teach that.

No. When we draw our standard relative to hair length that's a personal preference, an institutional preference. There are many godly people, many fine Christians who happen to wear their hair styled a little bit different way than we may have as our institutional preference. Many of our graduates, first thing they do after they graduate is let it get a little bit longer, and some of them even like to grow beards and so forth and that's fine. I think that it is wrong when you begin to add things to scripture. All we do is we become traditionalists. We become like our Roman Catholic friends, we take our fundamentalist traditions and put them on the same level as the word of God, and the Bible speaks against that. We must never put our personal preferences, our institutional preferences on the same level as a biblical mandate. We also must keep a good

spirit. We must not be judgmental, we must endeavor to have love for the brethren and for one another, an endeavor to go on and serve God.

From time to time, there are some serious violations of what we believe to be biblical mandates. And when that happens then we have to dismiss students. And I regret to inform you that within the last couple of weeks, we have had to dismiss two students because of serious offense. Now, I let you know that for several reasons. To remind you that not only is our system built upon trying to approach it in a biblical manner relative to biblical mandates, personal preferences, but also in a matter of trust. As I told you at the beginning of the quarter, we treat you like adults, we endeavor to let you know that we trust you, but when you violate that trust, that responsibility that we've given you, then there are serious consequences that come with that. I regret that these two students have had to be dismissed.

I don't know whether most of you know. We take for granted that most people know how our system works. But did you know that a very high percentage, probably near 70%, of the students we dismiss end up eventually coming back and attending the college and graduating? That says something about the system. Because the system is designed not only to protect the institution, our testimony for Christ but to help the young person. And the fact that most young people, when they leave, most of them when they even leave our offices say, "I'm going to be back just as soon as you'll let me back." It speaks to the system. I want to thank our student personnel, it's a very difficult thing for them to work through.

I also know that many of you go through the problem and the tension of when things are going on and you know about them what your responsibility is. Every year when this happens I have young people come to me and say, "There's just so much tension. I went to my friend who was disobeying God and disobeying the standards of the school, we tried to deal with them in a biblical manner. They laughed, they just weren't interested, and so I eventually let the administration know and now I want to know whether that's right or whether that's wrong." We certainly do not encourage some underground system around here, we don't put that pressure upon you, but I do think that there are some biblical principles.

I think there is a biblical principle of a responsibility to the entire body. For instance, you are not only facing this at the college, what are you going to do when you get out in your local church and you find that someone in the church, perhaps a deacon, only that they're involved in immorality? What's your responsibility to the church? You certainly have a responsibility to that individual, but I would like to think that you're going to say, "Hey, the testimony of that church is at stake and something has to be done. And if I go to him and he doesn't want to deal with it then I have to go to the pastor."

You're also going to face this when you get to be an employee and you're in a firm. And what if you're the only one who knows that someone is stealing from that particular firm? I would like to think that you're going to sense a responsibility to God and to your employer. The same thing is true in your family. What are you going to do when you have children and you have one son who knows that another son is in deep trouble and mom and dad don't know about it? I would like to think that you would teach your children that they have a responsibility. In dealing with it and letting the authority know, you're not only protecting that particular authority, and that family, or that firm, or that church, or that school, you're also, in the long run, going to help that Christian, that person. So I hope that you look at it within that context and that will help you when you have to face things like this and when you go through that very difficult time.

Seeing Doug Phillips stand up here and sing in chapel reminded me of a story. Doug Phillips is one of my favorite young men who's come through Cedarville College. I have a lot of things on my prayer list, and I certainly pray for some of our young people who have a difficult time getting a date. It's not that Doug can't get a date, he gets dates, but it's the second one that comes tough. Oh, he's surrounded by three girls down here on the front row. Sorry, Doug, I misjudged you. Get your arm out from around that girl. Doug, I want you to listen very carefully to this story. Do you have your notebook out? Okay. And there are a number of others out there in this same boat and you need help. I mean, some of you guys really need help. There will be cassette tapes available in the radio station at a discount.

Now, I know a few of you have heard this, but there have been so many requests for me to tell this story that I'm going to honor that person and tell this story right now. When I went off to college I left Cincinnati and I went south. Now, it's not that I'm embarrassed about the school, but I'm just not going to tell you the name of the school because I just don't mention a lot of those schools down south. But I went to this school in the south. I walked on that campus, I had not turned 18, I was 17 years old. I knew only two people on that campus, they had about 800 students. Great big fellow, a senior came running over to me and said, "My name's Vernon Blackburn, I believe you know yours." And I knew I was in trouble. He was a strange one.

The next thing he said is, "I want you to be my deaf and dumb brother." I said, "What?" He said, "You're not known around here and if somehow we could take you around and introduce you as my brother from Pensacola, Florida and you can't speak and you can't hear, it will be a riot. I said, "Vernon, I couldn't do that." He said, "Sure you can." He called a bunch of kids over and said, "I want you to meet my brother from Pensacola, Florida, he can't speak and he can't hear." And I didn't know what to do so I just went. Hey, I'm not kidding you, those kids, they were so gullible they bought that. They got so excited. Some of them would talk real loud. He said, "Can't hear a thing you're saying." Others would enunciate very distinctly so that I might read their lips. It went all day

long like that, it was the funniest thing. Did you ever walk past a bunch of kids standing on a street corner and they're talking about you and they don't think you can hear them?

I went to the basketball game that night and they went up and down the court and I couldn't shout, I couldn't cheer, I just watched. When the game was over I looked and across that gymnasium court came one of the most excited, best-looking, most beautiful teenage girls I'd ever seen in my life. She was one of those southern bells. She'd heard about me and she came running up to me. I didn't know what she wanted. The next thing I saw was. She worked with the deaf people in the church. It took her about five seconds to find out I wasn't deaf. I got red from here all the way up. We got married three and a half years later and she still says I'm the dumbest fellas she ever met. Doug, I hope that helps you. That's providence, direction.

This morning I would like to share a message with you from the book of 2 Timothy. If you'd turn there, please. In the second chapter of the book of 2 Timothy the apostle Paul is writing to a young man about how to be an above-average Christian. And that's my message this morning, how to be an above-average Christian. An Indian brave found an eagle's egg, and not knowing what to do with it he put it in the nest of a prairie chicken, and in time the egglet came out. And being surrounded by the prairie chickens he started scratching for his food, and flying a few feet, and dropping to the ground. The days passed, and the weeks, and the months, and the years.

And one day this now old eagle, still living with the prairie chickens, looked up into the sky and saw a huge bird silhouetted against the sky. He turned to an older prairie chicken and said, "What is that?" And the prairie chicken responded, "That my friend is the king of the birds, that's an eagle, but don't ever think that you could be a bird like that." And the eagle went back to clawing for its food, and flying a few feet, and dropping to the ground. It is sad that today many college young people across this land of ours are living like prairie chickens when God created you to be an eagle. I do not believe that God wants any of his creations to be satisfied with mediocrity. We need today to declare war as believers against all apathy, all mediocrity, and being satisfied with just the average. God created you and saved you to be something special for him.

And as Paul writes to Timothy, he is writing in a day when many of the believers are showing their colors in chapter one. Oh, they have fared very well when the times were going great, but now these are tough times and they're throwing in the towel. He says in verse 15, "This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." And of course from the Lord chapter 1:15, And then he names a couple. And as you work your way through the book you see a number of people Paul names who no longer are standing for the Lord.

And then he talks to Timothy about how he can go beyond that, how he can measure up to what God expects of him. In verse one he says, "You can be strong in the midst of these trials through the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He said, "In fact, you can take these things that you're hearing of me and you can pass them onto others who in turn will pass them onto others and be involved in the great commission, and in evangelism, and discipleship." And then Paul does what he is so capable of doing. Paul was so practical. And if you'll study Paul's writings and you study the ministry of our Lord, they're constantly drawing upon the everyday things that people could identify with. And he talks about a soldier, and they all knew about soldiers, and he said, "You can be like that soldier and endure hardness. But remember that no man that warreth entangled himself with the affairs of this life that he may please him who had chosen him to be a soldier."

And then he talks about the athlete in verse five. And certainly, Timothy and those reading this epistle knew about the Olympics and the athletic contest. And Paul says to Timothy "If a man strive for the victory for the wreath to be the winner he is not crowned except he does it according to the rule book, except he strives lawfully." And then he starts talking about the farmer. "The husbandman, the farmer, that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits." And that's where I would like for us to dwell this morning. Let's see what we can learn not from the soldier, not from the athlete, but from the farmer.

How many of you come from the farm? Could I see your hands if you live on the farm? We have a number of young people from farms. I talked to a student, prospective student, last night. Lives on a farm, planning to come this next fall. I like farmers. I appreciate them so much. So much to learn from them. I think it's interesting to take the Bible, and will not do it right now but just for your own study, take a concordance and notice what God has to say throughout scripture regarding the farmer. Now, contrast the farmer in 2 Timothy 2:6 to the farmer in Proverbs 20:4 and in chapter 24 of Proverbs verses 30 and 31. The farmer in proverbs is slothful, lazy, but the farmer that Paul speaks of in 2 Timothy 2:6 is hardworking. So certainly we would learn from this that God wants us to work hard.

Young people, if you're going to be a success at anything, and especially if you want to be special for God, you have to work hard. Things don't come easy. Life isn't that way. We also learned from the farmer something of patience. Some of us have a great problem with that. We would like to put the seed into the soil in the morning and by the end of the day reap the harvest but it just doesn't work out that way. You have to put the seed in, you have to look after the weeds, you have to wait to see what God is going to do with that harvest. Something else I would learn from that husbandman is that really he doesn't have a very glamorous job.

Young people, when I talk about being above average I'm not talking about being a glamorous pastor, a pastor of the largest church in the country. All of

you will not become presidents of corporations or perhaps a leading doctor. You may not be a prestigious attorney. The farmer does not have a glamorous job but he is special. Where would we be without the farmer? And I believe that we have to get the mentality that says, "All I want is what God wants. All I want to be is what God wants me to be," and not be consumed trying to get the position of notoriety, and glamour, and the applause that might go with that. But perhaps the main thing that I would learn from the farmer is that the farmer knows how to have disappointments and defeats.

And listen carefully young people. If you want to be an above-average Christian you're going to have to go through some tough times. People who never have setbacks do not become special people. I think perhaps it's our whole mentality today that says, "Everything's great, everything's tremendous, everything's fantastic." And you know that I love this emphasis and God does so many great things, terrific things, fantastic things for us but not all the time. And there are going to be the times of defeat, and there will be the times that you are down, and times of despondent, and times of discouragement, there will be the surprises, and how you handle those surprises will determine if you're going to be something special for God.

You see, the farmer goes out, puts his crop in the spring. And I can recall what? About a year ago we had so much rain. Not this past spring but in '81 that it would wash out the crop. So the farmer would come back, and he'd put the crop in again, and some more rains came and washed it out. Some farmers put their crop in three times. Finally said, "I'll just have to wait until next year. Then there are times when the crop goes in, it starts to grow, it becomes very high, the corn out in the fields like this past summer, and then comes the blight or the drought and they lose the crop or portion thereof.

About 10 years ago I can recall our farmers in Cedarville putting in their crop. They made it through the growing season, looked like a terrific harvest, but the rains, the heavy rains, came at harvest time and so they watched their crops rot in the field. But do you know what the farmer does? The hardworking farmer may lose his crop in the spring or in the summer or in the fall but he comes right back the next year and he puts in another crop. He doesn't quit. He doesn't know the word quit. I've been reading about the problems in the economy and how it's affecting the farmers, especially in our county, in our state. Some are in serious trouble but most of them just hang in there.

Some of you are about ready to quit. Some of you have had some surprises this year. Those may come in the form of physical difficulties, possibly an illness that you did not anticipate, maybe a broken bone. Perhaps you were an athlete. And how many athletes have had their great plans for their particular event and for that school year but all of a sudden there came that ankle injury or that hand injury or that eye injury and they're out for days, maybe weeks, sometimes for a season? How you going to handle that? Maybe it's the cancer or the heart problem. Possibly it's not your physical difficulty it's dad's or it's mom's or

brother or sister. How do you cope with that? You see, there are many people who make it just fine as we would see in 2 Timothy 1 when they were on top no problem but when the surprise came, when the persecution came, they turned their back upon God. My challenge to you is if you want to be above average keep on plugging.

Some of you have parents who don't get along. One of the greatest heartbreaks to me is to have some of you come every year and say, "Please pray for me, mom and dad are getting a divorce today." And only the Lord knows the families that some of you come from and the heartaches. Some of you have had a mom and a dad who've had a very close relationship, at least you thought they did, but now that you're away from home you begin to wonder. Maybe there's been something that's happened in the dormitory, some criticism that's come your way. Perhaps the adjustment of living with people of different personalities and coming from different directions has affected you. Possibly it's been in a classroom with a faculty member that you think does not understand you. You may have even concluded that that faculty member has something against you.

All I know is that practically every one of us in this building have things come into our lives from all different directions that we had not planned to face but they're there, and how we cope with those determines whether we're going to be something special for God. I know many of you face financial troubles. I want you to know that you're not the only one. And this is a terrible day of recession, depression, you name it. Difficulty getting jobs when you go home, Christmas, summer jobs. Many of you, parents out of work, loan cutbacks, grant and aid cutbacks. It's tough.

I was a sophomore in college, I didn't have enough money to pay the bill for that semester. When I was a freshman in college I packed my suitcase one day and was going home because I couldn't handle the pressure. I'd not adjusted very well to some of the guys I'd met, and some other things that had happened, and I just thought "Hey, I'll go home, that's the best way to solve that." Listen, young people, you never solved anything by running. Never. You start running now at this particular time of your life every time you face a trial and you'll run the rest of your life. Pray God to give you some backbone and some sticktoitiveness.

I had a buddy who talked me into staying, he was a freshman. When I was a sophomore I didn't have that money to pay that bill. And I had a man in Cincinnati I worked for and he'd always told me, "If you ever have a need just give me a call." And I gave him a call and he helped me somewhat but that wasn't all of the need. And I was determined. I was very stubborn and very independent that my parents would never help me through college, that I would pay my own way, so I refused to let my parents know that I had a need.

And I was sitting in my room one day and I said, "There has to be a way." And I'd been out beating on doors trying to get jobs at grocery stores, do anything to make some money and pay the school bill, and all of a sudden a guy walked into



my room. He said, "I own the dry cleaning business here on campus, it's going bankrupt, do you want it?" I said, "I'll take it." He said, "The problem is you'll collect a lot of dry cleaning and a lot of laundry but the kids will keep putting you off." I said, "They won't put me off. Give me that book." He gave me that book.

And I'm not kidding you, I started this cleaning business, called it Cuz's Courteous Cleaners. Advertised all over campus. Those kids would see me going into the dining hall and I'd wave a black book at them. They owed me 44 cents, I expected them to pay me 44 cents. I chased kids all over campus. I mean to tell you, they hated to see me coming. But I worked my way through my sophomore year, my junior year. My senior year when Mrs. Dixon and I had been married between our junior and senior year. I worked my way through three years of college and supported a family with the dry cleaning business. I am just telling you there is a way. Somehow trust God, work at it, see what you can do but hang in there, stay at the job.

He was a farm boy, and in 1832 he lost his job so he decided to run for the Illinois legislature. Ran and lost. In 1833, he failed in his business. In 1834, he was elected to the Illinois legislature, and in 1835 his sweetheart died. Are you beginning to identify with what this man must've been going through? In 1836, he had a nervous breakdown. In 1843, he was defeated for Congress. In 1846, he was elected to Congress. And in 1848, he lost his reelection bid. In 1854, he ran for the Senate and lost. In 1856, he was defeated for the vice presidential nomination of the Republican Party. In 1858, he decided to run for the Senate again and lost. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States. You see all you remember are the victories. But he had defeat after defeat after defeat for more than 25 years but he kept on coming back and he kept on plugging. And God built into his system something that caused him to be that great leader as this country went through its most serious of all conflicts, the Civil War.

Winston Churchill graduated from a public school in Harrow, England, he was not a good student. They only passed him because of his family ties. And at 67 years of age, he was elected prime minister of Britain. That great world leader was brought back to that public school to give a speech to all of those boys. And for weeks leading up to that speech they told those boys to hang on every word, to listen to the words of this great leader. And Winston Churchill walked in he was 5'5", 235 pounds. After a lengthy introduction, Mr. Churchill stood up, looked out at those boys, and gave this speech. "Young men, never give up. Never give up. Never give up. Never, never, never, never," and sat down. I'm sure those boys never forgot it, and we will never forget it either. Those of you who've been thinking about quitting on God, quitting on life, quitting on your friends, quitting on your education say, "God, make me like the farmer who works hard, who's patient, who's not trying to be glamorous, and who just hangs in there year after year after year."



Let's pray together, shall we? Father, many of these young people need encouragement today. A load of studies, some burdens that they bear back home that no one knows about. Some surprises that have come their way. They need your encouragement. Grant it we pray. I pray God you'll use this message not only today to help some of these young people to stay at it, but I ask all God that somehow in your providence when the going gets tough years from now, wherever they are, that you'll bring it back to their memories. And whenever they read this portion of scripture that somehow they'll recall what the farmer would teach them. Now, Lord, it's not just the students who need this I need this, the other administrators do, the faculty, the staff, use it in all of our lives. And thank you for this chapel service and what you've done. In Christ's name, amen. Have a good day.