

What Your Child Needs for a Successful Life

2010 Final Assembly Guest Past Pupil Speech by Dr Lyndon Drake



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*Lyndon next studied at the University of York (in the UK), and was awarded a **DPhil in Computer Science**. For the last few years he was a trader for Barclays Capital, an investment bank in London, and left as a Vice President to study for a **BA in Theology** at Wycliffe Hall, at the University of Oxford.*

Last Thursday I was at a dinner party in London where I was fortunate enough to meet a bunch of new people. Some of the people at this dinner party were famous, some were wealthy, and some in positions of power and influence. Two of the men I met had all three things: they were wealthy, powerful, and famous. I briefly met Lord Griffiths, who as well as having a seat in the house of Lords is the Chairman of Goldman Sachs, a huge US investment bank. And I had a longer chat with Lord Green, who until recently ran the HSBC, and is now a government minister.

But by far the most interesting person I met that evening was a man who introduced himself with a story about his time in prison!

He's called Jonathan Aitken, and he was sent to prison for perjury – for lying to a judge while under oath. He wasn't really a nice guy.

I'm telling you this story, because I want all of us to take a few moments to think about what success really is. Who's successful in the story I just told? Is it men like Lord Griffiths and Lord Green? They have wealth, power and fame.

Or is it Jonathan Aitken? He used to have power, but he squandered it by telling lies, and was sent to prison. He used to be wealthy, but went bankrupt. He used to be famous – and I guess he still is in a way, but it's not the kind of fame most people look for! He ended up losing his wife, his job, his freedom and all his possessions.

Actually, all three men would say that success is about salvation, not salary or status.

And that's what I want you to realise tonight, that your idea of success shouldn't be confined to the little things of wealth, or a career, or fame, or friends or even a family. Those things are great but they won't last – they didn't last for Jonathan Aitken, and they won't last for you either.

You need something much more lasting as your goal. You need to look beyond the brief span of this life to something eternal, beyond the limitations of this world to eternal life with God. Success is about salvation.

Jonathan Aitken realised this after his conviction for perjury. He realised that what he had been chasing after was fleeting, and that he needed something that would last. He went on an Alpha course, and became a Christian. He used his time in prison to study the Christian faith, including learning Greek while he was there so that he could read the New Testament in its original language.

In fact, he told us a great story about studying Greek in prison. You must have used flash cards to learn stuff at some point – you know, you write the question on one side and the answer on the other. I've got a big stack of Greek flashcards myself, with Greek words on one side and English on the other, and you just sit there going through them learning the words.

Jonathan Aitken said that in prison, you seem to spend most of your time queuing for one thing or another, and so he tried to use the time by learning Greek from his flashcards. Greek has a different alphabet. Inmates knew he had been rich and thought that the Greek was the secret codes to his Swiss bank accounts!

But Jonathan Aitken eventually realised that success isn't about a salary, success isn't about status, success isn't about social achievements. He realised that success is about salvation.

And that's why studying at Carey College is something I can look back on with thankfulness. Carey is a place where academic study is important, but also where knowing God is given the highest priority. I know that the teachers here, just as they did with me, still encourage every student to see that eternity is real, and that only Jesus can give you eternal life. I know that at this school Jesus is honoured, not just as a man of historical interest, but as God himself born as a human. Jesus is honoured here, not just as a religious leader, but as the saviour of the world.

Of course, there's a cost to following Jesus and giving him priority over other things. There are sacrifices to be made, but I believe passionately that those sacrifices are worth making.

In England, there's a newspaper writer called Matthew Paris. He's a convinced atheist – he doesn't believe in God. But he thinks that there is something amazing about Christianity, even though he doesn't believe it himself, and even he thinks that the cost of following Jesus is worth it if it's true. Listen to what he says:

The New Testament offers a picture of a God who does not sound at all vague to me. He has sent his son to Earth. He has distinct plans both for his son and for mankind. He knows each of us personally and can communicate directly with us. We are capable of forming a direct relationship, individually with him, and are commanded to try. We are told this can be done only through his son. And we are offered the prospect of eternal life – an afterlife of happy, blissful or glorious circumstances...

Friends, if I believed that, or even a tenth of that... I would drop my job, sell my house, throw away my possessions, leave my acquaintances and set out into the world burning with the desire to know more and, when I had found out more, to act upon it and tell others.¹

That's what Matthew Paris thinks – he thinks that if Christianity is true, then it's worth giving up everything else in the world in order to follow Jesus.

I want you to imagine the rest of your life, or the rest of your child's life. What is success for you? What will success look like for your child?

If you're a student at the moment, I want you to think about what you want to be one day. What do you most want to achieve with your life? Do you want a successful job? Do you want to have wealth? Do you want power? Would you like to win the X-Factor? Or New Zealand's next top model?

Or if you're a parent, what do you most want for your children? Do you want them to get married and have children? Do you want them to travel the world? Do you want them to earn enough to have a bach and a boat? Do you want them to have academic success – great exam results at school, a good degree and perhaps one day do some research that will change the world? Do you want to be able to write about your children's success in your Christmas letter to your friends?

Can I ask you change your idea of success to something far better, far more valuable? The X-Factor won't last, and having a bach won't last, but following Jesus will give you true success. Your life in this world will only last a little while, but the life that following Jesus brings will last forever.

I know that Carey College is a small school, and that whether you are a student or a parent it takes an act of faith to study here. Maybe you wonder how Carey will prepare you for later life, whether you'll

¹ <http://markmeynell.files.wordpress.com/2007/05/matthew-parris-the-heart-of-the-issue.pdf>

be able to study at a particular university or get the job you want or hang out with the people you admire?

Hopefully that slightly embarrassing CV Dad read out earlier will help to convince you that Carey won't limit what you can do after you leave this school. Carey won't limit your academic achievement or your job or your social life.

But if that is all you are looking for in a school, I want you to see that you haven't seen the most important thing about Carey. If you are a parent, then I want you to see your child's spiritual needs are their greatest needs, far more important than academic achievement and worldly success. And if you are a student, I hope that at Carey you learn that following Jesus is the greatest ambition you can possibly have in this world and the next.

No goal you can have is greater or more worthwhile pursuing. All of us have ambitions and desires that capture us. I learnt at home and at Carey that the most worthwhile ambition and the best desire I could ever have is following Jesus, no matter what the cost.

I have two small children of my own, and I pray the same thing for your children here that my wife and I do for our own children. I pray that you learn about the Lord Jesus at this school. I pray that you children learn at Carey that following Jesus is more important than anything else. I pray that you learn that success isn't about a salary, that success isn't about your social life, that success isn't about your status in the world. Success is about salvation, the salvation that Jesus offers.