Liberty University
DigitalCommons@Liberty University

June/July 2009 2009

6-2009

Liberty Graduates Receive a Memorable Farewell: More than 6,000 Students Receive Degrees

Liberty University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_june

Recommended Citation
Liberty University, "Liberty Graduates Receive a Memorable Farewell: More than 6,000 Students Receive Degrees" (2009). *June/July 2009*. Paper 7.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_june/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2009 at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in June/July 2009 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.

Liberty graduates receive a memorable farewell: More than 6,000 students receive degrees

June 01, 2009 ¦ Carmen P. Fleischauer

Liberty University sent its largest-ever graduating class — 6,350 students — into the world as Champions for Christ this year. Under sunny, blue skies, Arthur L. Williams Stadium was filled with more than 23,000 friends and families of graduates during Liberty's 36th Commencement exercises on Saturday, May 9.

The ceremony began with a dedication by co-founder Dr. Elmer Towns, who prayed for graduates in the beginning of their "walk in the world," asking the Lord to "go with them, aid them and use them greatly."

Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. welcomed some "very special guests," the graduating Class of 2009, and recognized the sacrifice that was made — by students and their families — for the completion of a degree at Liberty.

Falwell publicly honored three graduates for their accomplishments. Homer Wilson, age 83, was this year's oldest graduate; he received a Master of Arts in Religion. Charlotte Hurd, an online student, completed her degree in honor of her husband who was killed in an accident; she credits her academic advisor, Blake Weldon, and fellow online students, for the encouragement and prayer that helped her meet her goal. Jeffrey Taylor, an LU professor of kinesiology, was tragically killed a week prior to Commencement; his degree, Doctor of Education, was awarded

posthumously, and his chair was draped with a doctoral robe and hood.

In recognition of Mother's Day weekend, Falwell praised all the mothers in the audience who helped support their children throughout their time at Liberty.

"I'm going to recognize two special mothers as well," Falwell said. "First, I would like my mother to stand. She was not only standing by my father as a pastor's wife for many years, but she also graduated from Liberty University with a perfect 4.0 when she was in her 50s. ... And my wife, Becki, would you stand. Becki was a stay-at-home mother for 18 years and now has adopted 11,300 children here at Liberty. I don't know of anyone alive who loves our students as much as she does. She's constantly in contact with students — posting their pictures on Facebook, looking for ways to help them, listening to their prayer requests and just being their friend."

Graduation 2009

God was credited for the multitude of blessings Liberty had experienced over the past year and for the university's ability to thrive during difficult economic times.

"We take that prosperity as further affirmation that God's hand of protection remains on this university," Falwell said.

During his charge to the graduates, Falwell told them they would be remembered as the class that ushered in the "new era of Liberty University."

"The Class of 2009 was one of the last classes to benefit from my father's messages of encouragement to persevere in everything they do. They also experienced the first two years of Liberty's second generation," Falwell said.

He thanked students for the role they played in making the transition a successful one.

“My family greatly appreciates the warm reception that you have given us and the way that you have moved forward with faith and optimism after my father’s sudden passing,” he said. “This class will always have a special place in our hearts.”

Falwell instructed graduates to never give up.

“Don’t lose faith when that happens. One day you will look back in hindsight and understand God’s purpose in everything you’ve experienced. You will see that God had a plan for you the whole time, even when you couldn’t see it. The key is to remain faithful to the end,” he said.

He closed by asking graduates to carry on the vision and mission of LU to the world as champions for Christ.

“Now you need to apply what you’ve learned in whatever profession you choose … and let your service to Christ and your fellow man be your primary calling.”

Accomplished scholar, attorney, writer and actor Ben Stein delivered a message of creationism, patriotism and value for humanity to the graduates.

“He has served as a college professor, attorney, author, speechwriter, and even an actor, but the most compelling reason for Liberty University’s choice this year is this man’s work in exposing the intellectual and scientific deficiencies of Darwinism and the dangers of adopting Darwin’s ideas through the documentary Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed,” Falwell said. This year is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and a fitting time to have Mr. Ben Stein bring our Commencement address.”

Baccalaureate

Members of Liberty University’s 2009 graduating class and their families filled the Thomas Road Baptist Church sanctuary on Friday, May 8 for the 36th Baccalaureate.

Dr. Harold Willmington, dean of Liberty’s Willmington School of the Bible, opened the service with an invocation. After the prayer, Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. welcomed those in attendance and explained the Baccalaureate’s significance.

“The ultimate purpose of Liberty University is for its graduates to know Christ and make Him

known," he said. "That is why this is the most important of all the commencement ceremonies here at Liberty."

During the service, Provost Boyd Rist, Falwell and Vice Chancellor Ronald Godwin, presented an honorary doctorate of humanities to the service's speaker, the Rev. Jerry Thorpe. Duke Westover, a lifelong church construction consultant and administrative assistant to Dr. Falwell, Sr., also received an honorary doctorate.

Moments later, Thorpe took the podium, delivering a message of encouragement to the 2009 graduates. Thorpe, Pastor Emeritus of Temple Baptist Church in Odessa, Texas, and Liberty Board of Trustees member, addressed the importance of overcoming life's challenges. Using the biblical accounts of Gideon, Moses and the Apostle Paul, the speaker noted the men conquered overwhelming odds through their faith.

"I'm not challenging you tonight to go forth tomorrow and make Liberty University proud," he said. "But I am challenging you to go from this great school and make Jesus Christ proud."

Did I make Mom and Dad proud?

"We're really excited. She's been here for five years and she's finally graduating. She loves Lynchburg, she loves Liberty and she loves the Lord." — Bill and Jan Ward, parents of Kristen Ward

"We are extremely excited. We're so excited that we feel like we're graduating." — James and Nina Treadwell, parents of James Treadwell

"I'm now the parent of a Liberty grad, Charles Adams, and praising the LORD for His goodness … I was thrilled he [Ben Stein] was chosen as our commencement speaker. His address was more rewarding than I expected!" — Carolee Adams