

Letters to Young People - 'Leavers'

by [Gary Young](#) on Friday, November 12, 2010 at 10:56am

At this time of year, many of you (at least those who live in the Southern Hemisphere) will be leaving school, perhaps thinking about a new job, or university, or TAFE, an apprenticeship, or whatever. It's an exciting time, but also a time of reflection, and in some senses a time of sadness too. Many of you will be going to Year 12 formal dinners, and the excitement of preparing for those events can make this a heady time. Nothing, for that matter, can compare with the feeling of completing a course, doing the last exam, handing in the last paper, especially in that subject that you just never EVER want to do again! Whatever else it is, it is most definitely a time of change, and the nature of that change is perhaps where those conflicting emotions come from.

Part of the feeling of this time of year is one of reflection and, perhaps, a little bit of sadness too. Change is something that we tend not to like. All the things we have come familiar with, the things that have been a dominant feature of every day of our lives, will soon be gone. The places we go, the friends we know, the times we share; much of this will fade into memory before too long. This can be very unsettling for us, and very difficult to handle in many cases. We tend to try to cling to many of these things, and when we find that this is not possible, it causes us regret and sadness.

Really, though, we need to accept that change is a part of our lives. It is for everybody, not just for a Year 12 leaver! As Khalil Ghibran put it: "Life goes not backward, nor tarries with yesterday". Life must go forward, and there are times that will change and things that will pass. Though they might be things we have loved, they still change and pass and we must accept that. In a very real sense, life IS change: it is defined by moving forward, by the passage of time, and if we cling to those things that are past we try to halt that progress; in effect, to forget the reason we were in Year 12 in the first place! Some things, whether we like it or not, are going to be different next year.

Remember also, though, that you don't have to leave everything. There are people you now leave whom you probably won't see again, or at least hardly ever. But we CAN keep touch with those people who are special to us, especially with modern technology like facebook and everything else! But leaving year 12 doesn't have to mean leaving everyone and everything associated with it! Keep in touch! I have dear friends who live miles away from me, who I don't see sometimes for months or even years. But that doesn't make them any less my friends, and in some ways it makes the times I do see them even better. If there are people that you don't want to slip out of your life, then you need to make sure that they don't!

This is also, however, a time of excitement about the future. A time for plans, a time for looking forward to new challenges and new horizons. It's easy to get caught up in the new sense of 'freedom', to just think "Yay, no school!!" and do whatever we want to do. By all means enjoy some holidays, take a Gap Year if you've been planning one, do a bit of travelling if that's what you want to do: but remember: you didn't go to school all those years just so you could take Gap Year at the end of it! Remember as you look to your future that you will be making some important decisions about what you will be doing with your life. I guess the only bit of advice I would really like to offer in that regard is one that I've said before – don't let go of your dreams! If there is a goal that you have, something that you really want to achieve, then go for it! It may turn out that things don't go quite as you expected, but you will never know unless you try! Whatever it is that you want to do with your life from this time onward, don't let your life be a mundane one. You have it in you to accomplish great things, please don't accept ordinariness, because you are most definitely not ordinary!

In the coming weeks, for those of you who are leaving school, there will be excitement and sadness, there will be joy and tears, there will be a range of emotions hitting you in rapid succession that will at times bewilder you! And you will have the realisation that you are standing on the edge of the rest of your life.

To all of you, good luck and God bless. I will be praying for you.

To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace

(Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8).