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PVA REUNION
Camp Winnekeag
15 October 2021

"Teach Your Children Well"

8 **Scripture:**

9 **Deuteronomy 6:6-9**

10 Take to heart these words that I give you today. Repeat them to your
11 children. Talk about them when you're at home or away, when you lie down
12 or get up. Write them down, and tie them around your wrist, and wear them
13 as headbands as a reminder. Write them on the doorframes of your houses
14 and on your gates. *God's Word*

15
16 **Cover quote:**

17 *Honour, justice, and humanity* call upon us to hold, and to transmit to our posterity, that
18 liberty, which we received from our ancestors. It is not our duty to leave wealth to
19 our children: but it is our duty, to leave liberty to them. No infamy, iniquity, or
20 cruelty, can exceed our own, if we, born and educated in a country of freedom,
21 entitled to its blessings, and knowing their value, pusillanimously deserting the post
22 assigned to us by Divine Providence, surrender succeeding generations to a condition
23 of wretchedness, from which no human efforts, in all probability, will be sufficient to
24 extricate them; the experience of all states mournfully demonstrating to us, that when
25 arbitrary power has been established over them, even the wisest and bravest nations
26 that ever flourished, have, in a few years, degenerated into abject and wretched
27 vassals.

28 *John Dickinson, Resolutions of Committee for the Providence of Pennsylvania, 1774*

29
30 **CTW:**

31 **Isaiah 45:4-8**

32 I have called you by your name,
33 and I have given you a title,
34 even though you do not know me.
35 I am the Lord and there is no other;
36 there is no god besides me.
37 I am the Lord who armed you
38 even though you did not know me,
39 so that it may be acknowledged from east to west
40 that there is no god besides me.
41 I am the Lord, and there is no other.
42 I form the light and create the darkness;
43 prosperity and disaster depend upon my will;
44 I, the Lord, do all these things.
45 Rain down righteousness, you heavens;
46 let the skies pour it down from above.
47 Let the earth open up

48 so that salvation may blossom forth,
49 and let justice also spring up;
50 I, the Lord, have created it.

51
52 I've been thinking about the education we received at PVA, and I've come to the conclusion
53 it was incomplete.

54
55 Nobody told me that over the years I'd gain weight without doing anything differently, that
56 it would just happen automatically.

57
58 Nobody told me that once the weight gain had plateaued, without my changing a thing and
59 without gaining any additional weight, one day my stomach would start to push down on my
60 belt.

61
62 I always wondered why old guys wore suspenders. I thought it was just an old-guy thing. I
63 had no idea it was so their gut wouldn't hang out over their belts. Who knew?

64
65 Nobody told me, when I heard my parents getting up at night to go to the bathroom, that
66 was *my* future. I had no idea that one day I'd be awakened from a sound sleep in the middle
67 of the night with a pressing need to use the restroom. And from what I hear, some have to
68 do that several times a night. I'm not there yet, but who knows what awaits?

69
70 And nobody told me that once I was *in* the bathroom, I'd have to mentally coax myself to
71 do what I urgently needed to and then again mentally coach myself to stop doing what I had
72 urgently needed to do once I thought I was done.

73
74 Nobody told me I could be sitting on the sofa reading or watching TV and lose
75 consciousness, awaking twenty minutes later with no idea, beyond the fact that the book had
76 fallen or the TV show wasn't making sense, that I had fallen asleep.

77
78 I remember watching my parents struggling desperately to pull up a particular word or
79 memory of something that they knew very well, and wondering what was wrong with them.
80 Now I know.

81
82 No one told me I'd need to support my arm with my other hand when I reached to check
83 the clock in the night so as to prevent the occasional sharp pain in my shoulder.

84
85 No one told me I'd find it helpful to use my left arm against the door frame to leverage my
86 legs out of my car as I made to exit the vehicle.

87

88 No one told me I'd find it helpful to bend forward to stand up, then straighten my back
89 rather than just standing straight up.

90
91 I thought all these things were just things old people *did*, not because they were *necessary*.

92
93 No one told me if a fellow were to unexpectedly find himself in a condition to spend some
94 quality moments with his wife and called out to her in the kitchen to join him, he'd have to
95 say "Oh, never mind," a few moments later, before she was able to dry her hands and leave
96 the kitchen.

97
98 No one told me a time would come when I would actually begin a sentence, only to have to
99 stop part way through because I had absolutely no idea what the rest of the sentence was
100 supposed to be.

101
102 I used to preach mostly from outlines; now I most often preach from a manuscript. When
103 I've lost my thought mid-sentence while speaking, the outline has provided little help in
104 getting back to what I was saying, whereas a manuscript tells me exactly what I was going to
105 say, if only I can find my place within it. I actually number the lines and use larger font now
106 to improve the odds of keeping my place.

107
108 No, I think my education was incomplete.

109
110 -----

111
112 Ten years ago, I spoke at Pine Tree Academy graduation. This, in part, is what I told them
113 at the beginning of my remarks. (Picture it now, seniors sitting behind me on the stage, caps
114 and gowns, me turned halfway toward them as I speak):

115
116 Given the fact that you're likely to forget most, if not all, that I say today, I'm going
117 to give you a list of practical advice right up front, and I promise you that if you
118 remember and practice any one thing from this list, your life will be significantly
119 better in the long run.

120
121 1. Do a split and touch your toes every day of your life. If you do, you'll
122 never lose your range of motion.

123
124 2. Weigh yourself every day. Whenever you see that you're up a pound,
125 fast that day. It will never hurt you, and you will be able to maintain your high
126 school weight throughout your life.

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3. Don't strain when you use the bathroom; take you time and let your system work naturally. If you do that, you'll never get hemorrhoids. I've talked with lots of people over the years who never thought of that when they were young and are living with the uncomfortable results.

4. Drink lots of water; really. I mean, be intentional about it. Have a plan and stick to it. Don't wait until you're thirsty. It not only helps you with the previous item, but it is one of the single best things that you can do for your long-term health.

5. And one more while we're on the topic. Eat lots of fiber. Your system runs on fiber; literally. It's what makes you move. Just so you know it, there's no fiber whatsoever in meat. It is only found in non-animal foods. When you eat meat, it tends to sit and putrefy in your system. When you eat fiber, it stimulates your system to work effectively and efficiently, and you feel much better.

6. Get your heart rate and breath rate going a little every day. It keeps you healthy and improves your state of mind. If you stop for years and then try to start again; it's painful and demoralizing.

7. Save money every day. I mean it. Put something aside every day. I don't care if it's a quarter, get into the habit of setting some money aside every day - money that you DO NOT use for anything else other than safeguarding your future. If you start now, you will be amazed at the difference in your life once you're my age. If I had done that I'd be retired now. Instead, I'm stuck talking to a bunch of teenagers who'd really rather be doing some other than listening to me.

8. Laugh at yourself. Really. The Bible says that a merry heart does good like a medicine. If you stop and think about it, you're one of the funniest people you know. I laugh at myself all the time. Really. Out loud. Of course, I also laugh at people who laugh at me, thinking that I'm too stupid to know that they're laughing at me, but that's a whole 'nother story.

9. Pray five minutes a day. No wait, make it three - five is tough. I'm serious; make it your determined choice to pray for three minutes a day. If three minutes is too much starting out, work up to it. Set a timer. I'm not saying you can't go longer if you want, but commit to at least three minutes of

167 focused, intentional, no-other-stimulus prayer every day. You'll find that it's
168 hard to do, but it's a real blessing right from the start.

169
170 10. Read something from the Bible every day. Actually, I'd like to say read
171 your Bible through nonstop. By that I mean, start at the beginning and read it
172 through, and when you're done, start over again. I know it sounds impossible,
173 but it isn't, and it's really fun once you get the hang of it. For variation, read a
174 different version every time. Also, read through it fast - I mean aim for a
175 book a day. Don't be afraid to skim the slow parts. The whole point is to get
176 the big picture and you can't do that if you're getting bogged down in the
177 details. The fact is, the details will start to stick after a while anyway. I mean,
178 there's all kinds of things you've learned in your life that you have no specific
179 recollection of learning and yet you know them anyway. I frequently amaze
180 myself at all the things I know or know how to do and wonder where I ever
181 learned them. The same can be true about Bible details.

182
183 11. Listen to and play good music. No, I'm not defining it. You're smart
184 enough to know what lifts your soul and leaves you happy to be alive for
185 having heard it, played it, or sung it. Don't ever stop enjoying music.
186 Participate whenever you can throughout your lives, and you will be much
187 happier for having done so.

188
189 12. Memorize something regularly. Bible verses and poems are some of
190 the best things to memorize. The verses give you hope and comfort, and
191 poems are just fun. Plus, you'll amaze your friends in a weird sort of way
192 when you can rattle that stuff off at will.

193
194 13. Here's the hardest one. Go old school at least once every day. I mean,
195 turn off the phone; get off the internet; don't answer, don't text, don't check
196 messages. I know; it's stupid of me to even suggest it, but it really is
197 important to do.

198
199 14. Listen. No, I mean really LISTEN. We all tend to be silently running
200 ahead of the conversation in our minds whenever someone is talking. You
201 know, like you're doing right now. Instead, listen to what a person is saying.
202 Consider it before responding. If you do that, you'll find that you are sought
203 out more than ever and you'll actually learn some things in the process.

204
205 15. Observe. This one's closely related to the listen one. By observing, I
206 mean stop and look at something. Maybe it's an ant trail going up the wall. I

207 sat for hours one afternoon in Yosemite watching an ant trail going up and
208 down a redwood. Stop and watch a turtle crossing the road (mind the traffic
209 if you do). Stop and watch a family of geese or turkeys. Sit in the mall or on a
210 park bench and observe people. It's always entertaining, and you'll find that
211 you learn something in the process.

212
213 16. And on that point, learn something new every day. Consider your day
214 incomplete if you did not gain some small insight in the process of living it.
215 And if you miss a day, determine not to let another day pass without learning
216 at least one thing. You'll never get bored that way.

217
218 17. Remember that you cannot control what happens to you, but you can
219 control your response. If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation,
220 have some fun with it.

221
222 18. Keep in mind that if you don't like where you're headed or where you
223 are, you can always change direction. God gave you that choice; don't yield it
224 to bad thinking or to feeling controlled by the circumstances.

225
226 19. Make it your determination to speak well of others or to keep your
227 mouth shut if you can't. Failure to do that is one of the single most
228 destructive problems in the world today. The devil makes fools of us
229 Christians every time we badmouth someone. Always look for the good and
230 focus on it; if you can't find any, you're not looking hard enough.

231
232 20. Talk with an old person. While there are some notable exceptions, in
233 most cases they didn't get that way without developing some interesting
234 observations of their own, and when you talk with them, you'll find it
235 strangely refreshing and calming.

236
237 21. Think. I know - it's a word that's way overused and, duh, what did you
238 suppose we were going to do. But you're missing my point. I mean, really,
239 THINK. Walk around a thing in your mind and try to see what's really going
240 on in every instance. If you do that, you'll save yourself a lot of grief as you
241 go along.

242
243 22. Never lose your sense of wonder. Be amazed at things. Be joyful.
244 Things are seldom as stressful as we make them. To help you keep your
245 perspective in a given situation, ask yourself, "When I am dying, how much
246 difference will this have made?"

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23. Oh, and the last one, remember that God is God and you're not. I know, it sounds stupid, but if you think about it, that's where this whole problem of Evil started in the first place. Forgetting that single thing caused all of the misery and heartache and unhappiness and hurt and broken relationships in the history of the universe. Remembering it will always bring you back to center, no matter what problem you are struggling with. God's God, and you're not.

Now *that's* an education I could have used. No, I think PVA failed in educating me or at least that the education they gave me was incomplete. Then again, maybe they taught me all these things and I've simply forgotten.

Why did PVA come into existence anyway? Visionary leaders, backed by thousands of sacrificial givers, envisioned a school - a veritable "city on a hill," where their children could be educated in a traditional Christian manner and safe from undue worldly influence.

It was not to be an exclusive prep school for the financial elites. Indeed, my mother was a shoe factory worker and my father, a dental technician. It wasn't until after he died in 1993, I learned that, following decades at his craft, he had been making *less than* ten dollars an hour when he retired a few years before. When Mumma retired a few years later, from stitching Maine Hunting Shoes and Bean Boots, she was making a little *more* than ten dollars an hour. Judging from the schoolmates I know personally, I'm confident that most of us came from working class families and that our parents sacrificed greatly to meet the expenses of boarding school.

For most it was a hardship, yet they did it unflinchingly, clear mindedly, determinedly, because they loved us and they wanted us to be well prepared to achieve happiness, success, and quality of life. They wanted us to have advantages and opportunities most of them never had the opportunity for or had to pass up, and they saw PVA as the best way available at the time to set us on life paths that would fulfill their hopes for us.

And so we came to PVA. Pine Tree being a ten-grade school at the time, I didn't arrive until my junior year, but I remember it well.

As September 1969 approached, on a number of evenings Wayne Harlow and I would take dad's '65 Plymouth Belvedere wagon with the slant six and three in the tree, and head over to Cook's Corner to Sears to do some shopping for things we'd need in the dorm.

287

288 On the way back, I'd try to hit the 35-mph speed limit sign entering Brunswick at 50 miles
289 per hour over, then clamp on the brakes as we came up into town.

290

291 Once through town, from Brunswick to Freeport I'd hold the pedal to the floor. The old
292 wagon topped out at 105, and we'd cover the eight miles of interstate in short order. With
293 bias ply tires on that old wagon, it's fortunate we ever made it to PVA.

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296

297 Soon it was the Sunday of our arrival on campus, so we packed up the car and headed
298 toward the academy.

299

300 My excitement was palpable and only increased as we approached the campus, driving up
301 the shaded, sunken road between the stone walls and overarching maples, then turning into
302 the drive past the sign and seeing that beautiful campus laid out before our eyes.

303

304 We parked behind the dorm, and after checking in and receiving my room assignment, Dad
305 took care of financial arrangements while I lugged boxes up to third floor north, where 326
306 would be Wayne's and my home for the next nine months.

307

308 With each passage up and down the stairs, my excitement increased, and I was keen to share
309 it with someone.

310

311 I spied Patty Nichols in the lobby. She was a very pretty girl a year or so younger, and a
312 good friend from home, so I grabbed her by the hand and hustled her up the stairs to my
313 room, excitedly telling her about what I expected it would look like once Wayne had arrived
314 and we both were settled.

315

316 Then, having run out of words but not excitement, without a moment's forethought I
317 impulsively pulled her to me and kissed her firmly on the mouth. She was surprised but not
318 opposed, and we lingered there for a moment, lips upon lips, before stepping back and
319 realizing we were both feeling shy after the fact, the intense excitement having been spent on
320 the kiss, and we smilingly and quietly headed back down the stairs. It was the only kiss I
321 ever experienced in the boys' dorm, but not on campus.

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324

325 For me, the school year went along very well overall. I had a tendency to be all in with
326 whatever was going on, be it dating, choir, band, seminar, temperance society, and so forth.

327

328 Being so active, there was a time or two I would crash, but on those rare occasions (I think
329 once each year) when I was feeling especially overwhelmed, Mrs. Nickerson understood
330 intuitively when I told her that I was exhausted. She'd sign me in to sick bay, then send me
331 back to my room to sleep and rejuvenate.

332

333 I also remember a time or two feeling so overwhelmed with everything pressing in on me
334 that I went to bed and just gave up. I mean, gave up everything. I felt as though I could not
335 go on anymore, so I gave up all thought of succeeding at academy or life or even eternity.
336 I'd given it my best and had failed, so I just let go of it all and fell deep asleep.

337

338 That was of course exactly what I needed, yet I still would wake up in the morning, rested,
339 but without any idea of how to proceed.

340

341 At that point, my rational mind would kick in, and I'd realize I could sit up and put my feet
342 on the floor, so I did. Then I'd realize I could probably walk to the bathroom, so I did.
343 Then I'd think I might as well shower as long as I was there, so I did.

344

345 Then I figured I may as well dress, so I did, and I might as well go to breakfast, so I'd head
346 down the stairs and out the door. As I would pass by another student or a faculty member,
347 I'd think that I could smile and greet them, so I did.

348 And so another day would begin - a day, the thought of which the night before was more
349 than I could bear, yet by instinctively breaking it down into manageable parts was in fact able
350 to manage, and I went forward none the worse and probably better in the sense that I had
351 hit the wall and broken through.

352

353 I know that wasn't so for all my schoolmates, either in getting to that point or in getting past
354 it.

355

356 I'd never had any experience at feeling overwhelmed before, and I had no learned skills to
357 use in dealing with it. Thankfully, I learned from those experiences, both to recognize and
358 deal with such feelings, and through the rest of my life I've been able to playfully say, "I
359 don't do stress," and mean it. And as a bonus, it's been my joy to be able to help a great
360 many people through the years, as I counseled them, to recognize and take steps to manage
361 the stress they felt.

362

363

364

365 I really enjoyed my classes and teachers. It was all positive to me. I loved the food; I loved
366 joint rec; having come from a farm, I loved the rural setting and taking walks in the woods
367 or even just around the boys' side of the campus.
368

369 I was happy at Harris Pine Mills; it was just a part of boarding school life, and I never
370 resented it. It was especially fun the day I missed the bus to the mill and Tally Dorn took
371 me in his new 454 Corvette. He let it out on the tree-lined straight stretch partway way to
372 the plant, and those trees that so closely crowded the edges of the road passed by in a solid
373 blur as I recalled pictures of his badly wrecked Jag and his reputation for crashing cars.
374

375 I loved rooming with Wayne; we were and continue to be well-matched in pretty much all
376 ways.
377

378 I loved Esposito's French class and Krueger's geometry and Bailey's Bible class and Miss
379 McNeal's English class and Butler's history. I was pretty much lost in Walcott's physics
380 class, but I liked him well enough. Oddly, Bible class was a bit of drudgery to me, but I
381 knew Pastor Kidder was a good and decent man who cared for us kids, and we enjoyed a
382 lifetime of friendship through the years. I loved Mr. Loignon's shop class and doing the
383 wood projects and working on the Ford 289 engine on the stand.
384

385 I loved Wessman's choir, despite the 6:30am class time. He never failed to inspire and to
386 hold us to a high standard, and those lessons remain with me to this day.
387

388 I especially loved Mr. Hamel's music class at the end of the day, when he would introduce a
389 classical composer and piece, then cue up the needle on the record player and let the music
390 play. What a delightful blessing it was to sit quietly and listen as the music washed over me
391 and soothed me after a busy day. I always left that class feeling particularly relaxed.
392 I loved the band and choir trips, the open houses, the banquets, the trips to Sturbridge
393 village, Springfield Mall, and the Eastern States Exposition.
394

395 I loved the ski hill and the spiritual retreats to distant places, and I especially loved the
396 banquets at the Old Mill. It, too, remains my favorite place for special events, even today.
397

398 I loved singing "Seeking the Lost" in boys' chapel, and I never chafed at being there.
399

400 I loved the mix of cultures and colors and city-and-rural students that brought a richness to
401 the setting and to a farm boy from rural Maine.
402

403 There were rules and regulations I thought were pointless or excessive or over-
404 enthusiastically enforced, but I determined to cooperate, knowing my mind was still free
405 even if my person wasn't.

406
407 There were three things I made it my purpose not to do. I determined never to have to run
408 laps (Dean Grossball's discipline for accruing three tickets from minor infractions in the
409 dorm). I determined never to have to be told to get a haircut, knowing I'd rather keep it
410 short enough than be told what to do. And I determined never to be desocialized. Two out
411 of three wasn't bad.

412
413 My senior year was even better in most ways. When graduation weekend arrived, it was with
414 mixed emotions. I was thoroughly excited to be moving on to college, but at the same time,
415 I was loathe for my time at PVA to end. That experience, the flavor of those years, is
416 distinct and has never been duplicated.

417
418 There's very little that I would change about my time at PVA, and I have held those two
419 years dear in my heart all the years since. Now, fifty years after I graduated, they are as vital
420 and important to me as ever, and I remain profoundly grateful that my parents and so many
421 others sacrificed so we could be taught well.

422
423 Yes, in the end and despite my playful remarks at the beginning, PVA really did teach me
424 well, and I can't imagine life without the blessing of having attended PVA, its foibles and
425 imperfections notwithstanding.

426
427 I realize my positive experience was not replicated by all, and some of you may very well
428 have significantly different views regarding your time there. Yet here you are all the same,
429 going to the time and expense required to come here for the weekend, leaving the comfort
430 of your homes, to be a part of shared memories of common, albeit somewhat differing,
431 experiences.

432
433 At the core of it is a love for schoolmates and the friendships that were forged in the
434 crucible of that place and time.

435
436 When I spoke at the July 2000 reunion, I asked you. *"Why are you here?"*

437
438 The answer to that question remains the same, these twenty-plus years later: LOVE.
439 Whether you've thought of it in these terms or not, LOVE is what brought you here this
440 weekend. LOVE is what envisioned and built our beloved academy. LOVE is what has
441 sustained us in all the years since. LOVE is what will see us through this life and into the
442 next. LOVE.

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Three Dog Night opined, “*One is the loneliest number you can ever know.*”

And the Blues Brothers reminded us that “*Everybody needs somebody to love.*”
Love is incomplete in solitude. It is only as it is shared that it becomes complete.

In the absence of reciprocity, love is incomplete.

The minimum number required for love to be complete is two.

Love in the absence of reciprocity is grief.

Even complete love is expanded by including more people.

Love is not only the fulfilling of the *law*; it is the fulfilling of the *person*.

Teach your children well. PVA was born to teach *from* love, and sustained *by* love. And although many hearts were broken when the evidence of that love was destroyed with its closing, it is love that motivates us still.

May the love that binds us together and brings us back reunion after reunion, feed the souls of each of you this weekend and sustain you going forward.

And as another great bearded man once wrote, “Just make sure you stay alert. Keep close watch over yourselves. Don’t let your heart wander off. Stay vigilant as long as you live. Teach what you’ve seen and heard to your children and grandchildren.”

Yes, PVA taught me well.