**August 17, 2025 Living Well: Focus on the Goal Psalm 119:103-15, Philippians 3:12-16**

***“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105***

***“I do not count myself to have attained, but this one thing I do, I press toward the goal.”***

We celebrate our graduates today as they embark on the next chapter of their lives, whether they are transitioning from middle school to high school or graduating from high school. Today is a significant day to acknowledge this important achievement! We pray that God will guide your steps as you continue your journey.

There is an important story I want to share with you and all of us as we continue our series on Living Well: “A young man from a wealthy family was about to graduate from high school. It was a tradition in their affluent community for parents to gift their graduating children a new car, and the boy and his dad had spent weeks visiting one dealership after another. The week before graduation, they found the perfect car. The boy was sure it would be in the driveway on graduation night.

On the eve of his graduation, however, his father handed him a small package wrapped in colorful paper. The Father said the package contained the most valuable gift the Father could think of. It was a Bible! The boy was so angry that he threw the Bible down and stormed out of the house. He and his father never saw each other again.

Several years later, the news of his father's death finally brought the son back home. After the funeral, he spent an evening alone, going through his father's possessions that he was set to inherit. It was during this time that he discovered the Bible his dad had given him.

Overwhelmed with grief, he brushed away the dust and opened it for the first time. As he did, a cashier's check dated the day of his high school graduation fell into his lap. It was for the exact amount of the car they had picked out together. The gift had been there all along, but he had looked away from it.

**The most valuable gift that God has given us is His Word**. The only way to navigate the pressures, problems, and complexities of life is by learning to live according to the Word of God.

As you start this new chapter, I want to remind you of Paul’s words: don’t think you’ve reached the top of your life just yet. Thank God for reaching this milestone, but I encourage you to keep pushing toward goals that will create even more opportunities for you. The sky’s the limit, and I urge you to stay on the path to success.

**There are many paths to success, but the best way to live a fulfilling life is to embrace the Word of God**. King David expressed it perfectly when he said, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path**." I believe that all of you have a Bible; if you don’t, please let me know**. Let me ask you: what are your most treasured possessions? Is the Bible included? I encourage you to make the Bible your most cherished item from this moment on. Read the stories within it, learn how to succeed, discover how to overcome challenges, and understand how to build good relationships with your friends and parents. Let the Word of God guide you, much like a lifeguard at the beach. Let it be sweeter than honey (**Psalm 119:103**)!

**Living well as Christians means focusing on our ultimate goal: eternity**. We are encouraged to persevere until the end. While we may currently have a good relationship with God, we often face challenges that can lead us to doubt His goodness. It is during these times that we should strive to do whatever it takes – avoid sins, assist others, pray always- to reach our goal.

**Living well involves keeping our eyes on the prize,** winning the race, and ultimately receiving the crown of righteousness, allowing us to be with the Lord forever. We can achieve this by loving the Bible—the Word of God—and meditating on it day and night. I want you to cherish it as the most precious possession you own.