



Advice for
GRADUATES

John Witherspoon
(1723-1794)

ADVICE FOR GRADUATES

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ADVICE FOR GRADUATES

GRADUATES, you have now finished the usual course of study here, and are about to enter public life in a variety of ways, according to your inclination or circumstances. I willingly embrace the opportunity of exhorting you at this important period of your lives. I do not mean to say much, if anything, that you have never heard before, but I intend to lay hold of your present situation with some hope that what I say now will remain in your memory and influence your future conduct. For clarity, I will arrange what I have to say under three headings: 1) your duty to God and the good of your souls; 2) continuing your studies or the improvement of your talents, as members of society; 3) prudence in your interaction with the world in general, your outward provision, and other circumstances in life.

1. Your Duty to God

The first of these, [your duty to God,] *is the most important thing for anyone*. I know that some of you intend to enter the service of Christ in the ministry. I heartily affirm that true religion¹ is absolutely

¹ **religion** – Throughout this booklet, “religion” refers to the life or activities that spring from a relationship with God

necessary for someone entering the ministry. But I wish those who are destined for other employments would not make an unjust and dangerous comparison here—a comparison which could be ruinous to their own souls. Because true religion is necessary for a minister, and they are conscious or suspect that they lack religion, instead of taking seriously the things that belong to their peace, they simply decide to follow a different occupation. But alas! While their decision does make a very great difference to the public, I think it makes only a small difference to the persons themselves. A clergyman without religion, to be sure, is a dreadful character, and when visible, a detestable one. But just think, at the end of your life, it will be little comfort to go to the place of torment, not as a minister, but as a lawyer, physician, soldier, or merchant. Therefore, let me say to you, and to all who now hear me, that the care of your souls is the one thing needful. All mankind, of every rank, denomination, and profession, are sinners by nature. The ministers of the New Testament have received a commission to preach the gospel to every creature: “He that believeth...shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16).

While I say this, I beg you to consider that *the advantages you have enjoyed will make your guilt more serious* if you neglect them. We can observe equity as well as wisdom in the providence of God. Normally, God inflicts judgment when a person or people is ripe for the stroke, except for when He sovereignly does otherwise for reasons unknown to us. Just like some plants

by faith in Jesus Christ and repentance from sin, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

and seeds ripen faster than others, because of their nature and the soil or situation where they are planted, so some persons, by the early care they received and the privileges they have enjoyed, fill up the measure of their iniquities sooner than others and are more quickly overtaken with deserved vengeance. There are many common sayings that are the effects of error and prejudice. One example that you will be told by many is that the children of good men are as bad as any. If this is intended to mean that an orderly, godly education gives no reason to hope for good behavior in later life, it is at once contrary to reason and experience. But if we should say that when young persons who were educated in a godly way break away from their restraints and are seduced into sinful courses they commonly run faster and farther than others, it is a certain fact, which we can easily account for and offers an important lesson for all of us.

After urging you to lay religion to heart, I must beseech you to *guard against being too easily satisfied* in a matter of infinite importance. Do not think it enough to be prudent, cautious, or decent in your conduct, or to attain a character formed upon worldly principles and governed by worldly motives. I am not against (as you all know) introducing every argument against sin and showing you that loose practices are ruinous to name, body, and estate. Neither is it wrong that you should fortify godly resolutions by such motives. But alas! The evil lies deeper. "Except a man be born again...he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Joh 3:3, 5). True religion must arise from a clear and deep conviction of your lost state by nature and practice, and

a sincere trust in the pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace of God.

Allow me, while I am still on this subject, to earnestly recommend to everyone who fears God to *apply themselves from earliest youth to the spiritual disciplines*, a life of prayer and communion with God. This is the source from which a real Christian must derive the secret comfort of his heart. This is the only source that gives beauty, consistency, and uniformity to an exemplary life. The reason why I mention it on this occasion is that youth, when the spirits are lively and the affections vigorous and strong, is the season when you must form this habit. There are advantages and disadvantages to every stage of life. An older Christian will naturally grow in prudence, watchfulness, usefulness, attention to the course of providence, and submission to God's will, but will seldom attain to greater fervor of affection and life in divine worship than he was accustomed to in his early years. Instead, he will generally need to guard and strengthen the habit by order and form, instead of trusting to occasional impulses.

Be companions of those who fear God. Always esteem those most highly who fear God, and avoid the society of loose persons as you would a contagious disease. Especially avoid those who are infected with the principles of atheism and agnosticism, or enemies to the power of religion. Many of these are much more dangerous to godly people than open sinners. Decency is against open sinners; the world itself condemns them; reason despises them; and prudence shuns them. He must have a very degraded taste indeed who can find pleasure in disorder and riot. If I had no higher pleasure on earth than in eating and drinking, I would not

choose to eat and drink with the drunken. Order, neatness, elegance, and even moderation itself are necessary to exalt and refine the pleasures of physical life. Therefore, I refuse to suppose I will ever hear of any of you roaring and swearing in taverns, or wasting your bodies and goods by lewdness and debauchery, or that you take pleasure in those who do so. But be especially careful to avoid those who are enemies to vital godliness, who might not speak directly against religion but give every vile name they can think of to all who seem to be spiritually in earnest, and speak with contempt of spiritual activities. Sadly, these are often successful in making some incautious persons ashamed of their Redeemer's name, His truths, His laws, His people, and His cross.

I hardly need to say that I am not recommending pharisaical pride and haughtiness, far less a hasty and presumptuous judging of the state of others. It is not only lawful, but our duty, to have free interaction with our fellow citizens for the purposes of social life. It is not only lawful, but our duty, to be courteous and to give respect and attention to others, according to their rank and place in society.

What I mean to caution you against is unnecessary, voluntary activities with others that have inclination [toward evil] for their motive and pleasure for their object. Regarding this, we can say confidently with the inspired prophet, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Pro 13:20).

2. Self-Improvement

Now I want to speak a little about the continuation of your studies and the improvement of your talents. Your school education is only intended to give you the elements and first principles of knowledge, which should whet your appetite for more and which will enable you to proceed toward success.

Generally, one of my favorite points has been to recommend *combining godliness and learning* and to guard young persons against opposite extremes. Sometimes, we see the pride of unsanctified knowledge doing great injury to religion; and on the other hand, we find some truly godly persons despising human learning and disgracing the most glorious truths by a low and inappropriate manner of handling them. Because of this, careful, diligent study is most important for those who intend to serve in the ministry.

But I also want to recommend to all of you, without exception, a life of *diligence and hard work*. Avoid sloth as a dangerous enemy. Fear it, hate it, and despise it. It is a common saying that men do not know their own weakness; but it is just as true, and more important, that they do not know their own strength. Please take my word for it, and I dare say, everyone who has sense and experience will confirm it, that many people with only moderate giftedness have been useful in their generation, respected by the public, and successful in life, while those of superior natural talents, by mere slothfulness and idle habits, or self-indulgence, have lived useless, and died contemptible.

I want to warn you also about an attitude in young people, which you know I have often set myself to

oppose. [Many young people] think that loose, impulsive activities, and sometimes even free pursuit of immoral or objectionable activities, are signs of spirit and talent. The very contrary is the truth. It requires no genius at all to do mischief. Persons of the greatest ability have generally been lovers of order. You will never find an instance of a man's arriving at great reputation or usefulness, be his talent what it might, without industry and application.

Allow me now to recommend to you *firmness of mind and steady perseverance*, as absolutely important to your progress and success. Whatever a man's talents from nature may be, if he apply himself to what is not totally unsuitable to them, and holds on with steadiness and uniformity, he will be useful and happy. But if a man is loose and volatile, impatient of the slowness of things in their usual course, and shifting from project to project, he will probably be neither useful nor happy.

I am somewhat at a loss what to say as to *character and reputation*; yet it is so important that it must not be omitted. True religion should give you a higher and nobler principle to govern your conduct than the desire of applause from men. Yet, while recognizing that the approval of the great Judge (God Himself) ought to be the great purpose of your life, it is a good and right ambition to do what is praiseworthy among men. Young people need to keep this in mind as a powerful encouragement to virtuous actions. A truly good man will seek no praise but by honest means, and will be strong enough to endure disgrace itself, if brought upon him by adherence to his duty. Yet he will also be tender and careful not to give anyone just cause to accuse him of

doing wrong. Consider that your character is already beginning to form. Every step you take further in life will both determine your character and display it to others. Be informed that while many complain about the unfairness and criticism of the world, a man's real character, in point of ability, is never mistaken and only seldom mistaken in point of morals. I agree that there are many malicious and critical people, but lies are not half so durable as truth. There is a fairness in the general public which will show itself when it has access to information about someone. Therefore, respect the judgment of mankind without idolizing it. Be as careful as possible to do nothing that deserves blame and as little concerned as possible what reproaches may fall upon you undeserved. It is not a contradiction but perfectly consistent to say that a man should be tender and even jealous of his character and yet not greedy of praise. There is an amiableness and dignity in the first, but a meanness and littleness in the last.

Another advice, similar to the last, is, *do as much as you can to deserve praise and yet avoid as much as possible the hearing of it*. This is really just another view of the same subject. To make it more useful and to make my intention clearer, I will extend it both to praise and blame. When you come into public life and become the objects of general attention, not only guard against fishing for applause and being inquisitive after what people think or say of you, but avoid knowing it as much as you decently can. My reason for this is that, whether you want to or not, you will hear as much of the slanders of your enemies as you will bear with patience, and as much of the flattery of your friends, or interested persons, as you will bear with humility.

Therefore, prepare yourself for both but seek for neither. Several eminent authors, as you doubtless know, have advised young pastors and other public speakers to find a friend who is a good judge and ask him to make honest remarks about their composition, posture, delivery, and so on. I have nothing to say against the benefit of the advice in itself, but at the same time, I am not convinced it is necessary or useful. Usually, advice like this is asked with a view to obtain a compliment; and it is seldom given with sufficient freedom and impartiality. If any man has humility and self-denial enough to wish to know his own faults, he will discover them himself with little difficulty. If not, his enemies, rivals, or talkative people will help him out. Perhaps you think that comments fueled by hatred or envy have no great tendency to reform—like a rusty knife that makes a very painful wound, though not very deep. I agree to this fully, and yet affirm that there is so much the more virtue, so much the more wisdom, and perhaps I may add, so much the more pleasure, in making good use of negative comments.

I conclude this part of my subject by advising you to *maintain a friendship with one another* and to carry the relationships of early life through the whole of it. To this I add that you ought to desire and cultivate correspondence with godly and knowledgeable people. Man, made for society, derives his best advantages from the united efforts of many working together for the same goal. As to godliness, nothing is more essential to it than social interaction. Godliness properly consists in supreme love for God and fervent charity to all men. The Christian needs the support of others in his journey through this world, where he has to encounter so

much opposition. Christians are pilgrims and strangers in the earth. Therefore, they ought to keep together, lest they lose their way. They comfort each other in distress, they assist each other in doubts and difficulty, they embolden each other by their example, and they help each other by their prayers.

This is no less the case in respect to knowledge. It has been observed that great and eminent men have generally, in every nation, appeared in clusters. The reason for this is probably that their society and mutual interaction greatly enhance their usefulness and give force and vigor to their individual talents. Nothing encourages diligence so powerfully, or so kindles the best sort of ambition, as the friendship, advice, and assistance of men of learning and worth. The approval of one of these is of more value to a noble mind than peals of applause from an undiscerning multitude. Besides, the assistance which scholars give to each other is really necessary in completing particular works of great breadth and usefulness. It is because of the labors of preceding ages that it is now possible in one life to attain to such a degree of knowledge as we have sometimes seen. It is by the cooperation of many friends that one man has sometimes been able to present to the public a system of science, which, without that aid, he would have vainly attempted to complete.

3. Your Interaction with the World

The last topic on which I promised to give you my advice was prudence in your interaction with the world in general, your outward provision, and other

circumstances that conduce to the happiness and comfort of life.

I begin with what I have often recommended to you, *frugality in the management of your affairs, order and exactness* in your dress, furniture, books, and keeping of accounts. Nothing could be further from my mind than to recommend miserly covetousness, having no higher ambition and hardly any other desire than that of getting riches. In my opinion, this is completely inconsistent with the character of a gentleman and a scholar. I never knew of a person in whom this attitude took hold in early life that could focus on study or that became prominent in anything that was good. The opposite vice (careless wastefulness) is the common fault of youth, and it is against this I would caution you. The frugality I would recommend is that of an independent mind, that fears and scorns subjection to others, and remembers the just saying of Solomon that the borrower is servant to the lender. That frugality which arises from order and carefulness is consistent with and even the parent of generous feeling and liberal giving. Frugality is the source of giving to others, for no one can bestow out of an empty purse. On the other hand, covetousness and wastefulness are actually consistent with each other; and indeed they are more frequently joined than most people realize. The stricture of Sallust in the character of Cataline, "Greedy of others' property, wasting his own," has been often cited, and may generally be applied to loose and profligate living. I hope therefore you will learn early to distinguish between the virtue and the vice, and to adhere to the one as much as you despise the other.

I will make an observation here that may be applied not only to what I just mentioned, but to almost every

other character quality. It will be much to your benefit if you learn early to *make not a hasty but a deliberate and unbiased judgment of the character of others from appearances*. The habits of life which men contract give a bias to their opinions and even a tincture to their conversation and phraseology. Persons inclined to carelessness and self-indulgence will often ascribe to covetousness what arises from a very different cause. In my youth, I knew a person who declined to engage in a party of pleasure. He was accused by his companions as “mean” and “sneaking,” and afraid of his purse, when in reality it was not that he loved money more, but pleasure less. Sometimes a person of principle will see it proper to decline a party though it is not directly sinful. He might believe the party is an unnecessary waste of time, or that it would be dangerous and ensnaring to him due to a particular circumstance. I have also known of older people being called “close” or “covetous,” but it was simply due to their habit, perhaps a necessary habit, of strict temperance and a secluded manner of life. They were very sparing because of their personal needs, and even not much disposed to social activities. Yet when someone would go to them for support of a godly or charitable purpose, they would be much more liberal than others of an opposite turn of mind.

I could make similar observations on the opposite character—liberality. It is not every kind of openness of heart that indicates wastefulness. We are told by Solomon that “the liberal soul shall be made fat” (Pro 11:25), and by the prophet Isaiah, that “the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand” (Isa 32:8). Just like it is seldom necessary to

judge others dogmatically, so patience and the most charitable allowance is both our duty and for our benefit.

In the next place, I recommend to you *humility of heart and meekness of behavior*. I consider in this place the grace of humility as a virtue especially important for your earthly comfort. I mean to treat it as a maxim of prudence for your life in this world...Nothing is more offensive to others than a proud, arrogant manner. It not only magnifies every fault but nullifies even good conduct. It is not only hateful to virtuous people, but it is equally, if not more so, to those who are without principle. Some vices recommend a man to sinners in the same line, as one drunkard is pleased with the sight of another. But nothing is so hateful to a proud man as another of the same character! Nor is offence sooner given or taken than between those who perfectly resemble each other in pride. This vice is not only hateful to persons of understanding and reflection, but to the most ignorant, being as easily perceived as it is universally hated.

The moral virtue of meekness and humility is the best groundwork even for worldly politeness and prepares a man to receive that polish which makes his behavior agreeable with everyone. The same virtue, by the calmness and self-control that accompanies it, enables a man to manage his affairs to his own advantage in whatever calling he may be engaged, or in whatever station he may be placed. A good shopkeeper is normally characterized by this quality. People love to go where they meet with good words and gentle treatment; whereas the irritable and moody may be said to

have a repelling quality about them that prevents anyone from approaching them.

To complete the whole, meekness of spirit is as useful to a man's self as meekness of behavior is acceptable to others. The meek suffer much less from the unavoidable evils of life than those of a contrary inclination. Many minor hardships are in a manner annihilated when they are met with calmness. The harm they do us is not so much from their severity as it is from the irritability of our own minds. Clearly, the same meekness must greatly alleviate more serious calamities. And you may perceive that as it mitigates the sorrows, it multiplies and sweetens the comforts of life. A moderate portion gives greater satisfaction to the humble and thankful than the most ample possessions to the proud and impatient.

Nearly allied to the above virtue is the *government of your passions*, and therefore of this I shall say but little. Everyone must be sensible how important it is, both for the success of your worldly callings, and your usefulness in public life, to have your passions under control. Men of furious and ungoverned tempers, prone to excessive attachment or resentment toward persons or things, are seldom successful in their pursuits or respected and useful in their stations. Persons of ungoverned passions are almost always fickle and changeable in their responses, which is of all things the most fatal to important undertakings. These generally require time and patience to bring them to perfection. As to public and political life in particular, the necessity of self-government is so great, and so universally acknowledged, that it is usual to impute it in eminent

men, not to principle, but to address and policy.² It is commonly said that politicians have no passions. Without inquiring into this, I shall only say that whatever truth may be in it, it is still in favor of my argument. The hypocrisy does honor to the virtue. If the appearance be so necessary or so useful, what must be the value of the reality?

I will here take an opportunity of refuting, or at least correcting, a common saying or proverbial sentiment. (Indeed, many common sayings that are believed in a blinded world are nothing but deception.) People often say, in defense of sudden and violent passion, that it is better to speak freely and openly than to “hold it in” and cover secret hatred. Perhaps I might agree, if the inward rage were to be as violent, and continue as long, and return as often, as indulged passion. Every person must agree that wherever there is a deep and lasting hatred that never forgets nor forgives, but waits for the opportunity of vengeance, it deserves to be considered as truly hellish. But in most instances of offence between man and man, to restrain the tongue is the way to govern the heart. If you do not make mention of an injury, you will truly and speedily forgive it, and perhaps literally forget it. Rage is like a fire. If a vent is given to it, it will increase and spread while there is fuel to consume; but if you can confine and stifle it, you will completely extinguish it.

After the government of the passions comes the *government of the tongue*. Really, governing the tongue usually follows from governing the passions, so all the same arguments apply, yet it deserves special

² **address and policy** – skill and art.

attention separately as a maxim of prudence. Great faults of speech often arise, not from passion, but from carelessness and lack of discernment regarding the appropriateness of time and place—and indeed many other reasons. Therefore, I earnestly recommend that you make a habit of restraining your speech, especially in the early part of life. “Be swift to hear,” says St. James, and “slow to speak” (Jam 1:19). Forwardness in speech is always thought an arrogant thing in youth, and in the company of older people is often considered as an insult, as well as bad judgment. It is very common for the world in general, and still more so for men of judgment and insight, to form an opinion of someone’s general character from just one circumstance. I think one of the most unfavorable things in this way is a talkative disposition. If the first time I meet a young man, he talks incessantly and takes the whole conversation to himself, I will hardly form a good opinion of him, whether what he says is good or evil, sense or nonsense. There are some people, who, one might say, give away so much wisdom in their speech that they leave none behind to govern their actions.

But the primary danger of an ungoverned tongue is that it kindles the fire of contention among others and makes enemies of the speaker. Solomon says, “Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth” (Pro 26:20). A little experience will show you how unsafe it is to speak freely about people who are not present. In this case you put yourself wholly in the power of those who hear you, and are in danger, not only from their treachery or malice, but from their mistakes, ignorance, and imprudence. Perhaps it would be too rigid to say that you ought never to speak unfavorably about someone in his

absence what you would be unwilling to say in his presence. Some exceptions to this rule might easily be conceived. But both prudence and fairness require that you should be very reserved in [mentioning others' faults], and either carefully keep the rule or be sure that good reasons justify departing from it.

This is a good place to give you direction about *the best conduct when you suffer from the tongues of others*. Many and grievous are the complaints of what men suffer from the poisonous arrows of envy and malice. And there certainly is a strong tendency in some to invent, and in many to believe, slanderous lies. The prevalence of partisanship in religion or politics always produces a plentiful crop of this poisonous weed. One of the most important rules about this is that when an accusation is in any degree well-founded, or suspicious appearances have given any occasion for it, the first duty is to reform what is really wrong and keep at a distance from the disputed limit.

This will bring good out of evil and turn an injury into a benefit. But often the slander is perfectly groundless, and I think it best generally just to ignore it. Time and the power of truth will of themselves do justice in such cases. But if you show impatience, resentment, or a desire to refute it, most mankind will believe it more rather than less. If slander were a plant or an animal, I would say it is a very strange one, for it very easily dies but cannot easily be killed. Ignoring slander reveals greatness of mind and conscious dignity, which of itself commands respect. Being offended or distressed by slanders reveals undesirable weakness, whether the accusation be true or false.

There are some exceptions to this rule. There might be cases where vindicating yourself is needed and effective, but they are not many. Life experience has led me to make the following distinction: If the accusation or slander is specifically related to a particular fact, defined by time, place, and other circumstances, and if it is completely false or essentially incorrect, the matter may be explained and justice may be done. But if the slander imputes a general character to a man, he should not try to refute it, except by his conduct. The more he complains about it, the more he mentions it, the more he denies it, the more it will be believed.

As an example, if people claim that a man spoke profanity to particular people at a certain time and place when he was not present at all, it would be easily and completely refuted. But if he is accused of being proud, argumentative, covetous, or deceitful, and these accusations are supposedly supported by a train of facts, it is better to leave them completely alone and let his life speak for itself. There are instances in history of accusations brought with much credibility and vehemence, which have been from the beginning disbelieved or over time refuted. Hence the Latin proverb, "Truth is great and will prevail."

All these particulars I have mentioned are the happy effects of wisdom and goodness united, or rather, the fruits of the wisdom that is "profitable to direct" (Ecc 10:10). But I must add another advice that is the immediate effect of kindness and goodwill: *Be ready to assist others and do good as you have opportunity*. As everything is liable to be abused, sometimes the maxims of prudence take a wrong direction and close the heart against sympathy and tenderness towards others

in distress. Sometimes indeed, the coolness and composure of spirit, and that self-control that comes from thoughtfulness and experience, is mistaken for a caloused and unfeeling heart, even though it is a very different thing. Giving in to passion, even under the finest feelings, is the way to prevent, instead of promoting, usefulness. A parent overwhelmed with surprise and anxiety at a child's serious accident is incapable of thinking and responding—and might even need the assistance he ought to be giving! Apart from this, there really are some people who become indifferent to the needs or desires of others and do not want to inconvenience themselves unless their own selfish concerns would be promoted at the same time.

Contrary to this, cultivate a readiness to serve, not merely by kind words and friendliness, but by *taking a real interest in the affairs of others*. Be ready to lend your advice, your help, your interest, to those that need them. If you cannot help someone financially, you can still do many deeds of valuable friendship. Let every neighbor see that you are not ready to quarrel needlessly, nor insist stubbornly on trifles. And if you become respected and influential in life, use your influence to defend every class of people. If you are responsible for the business of others, attend to it with the same faithfulness, and if possible, with greater punctuality than you would to your own. Some excuse not doing so by complaining that mankind is ungrateful and unjust. But in my opinion and experience, this is not true. There are many ungrateful and unjust individuals; but in the world in general you will find clear discernment and fair responses. Our Savior tells us about the fault of rash judging what is equally true about all kinds of injuries, "With

what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" (see Luk 6:38).

In my opinion, this should be understood both ways. As cruel Nabal generally meets his match, so kind and friendly people reap the fruits of their kindness to themselves or theirs. The truth is: the attitude itself is not complete until there is no seeking an immediate return. If you give, looking for a speedy recompense, it is not giving but selling. You may, however, safely trust the promise of God: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecc 11:1).

I have known many acts of kindness that were both remembered and repaid long after they had been forgotten by the one who did them. In fact, sometimes kindness may be repaid in another generation. It is a great legacy for a man to leave to his children that he had always been a friend to others and never refused his help to those who needed it.

This is a good place to introduce a subject which writers of the first class have often handled: I mean *private friendship*. Some unbelieving writers have actually objected against Christianity because they say it does not recommend private friendship or the love of our country. If this were true, it would not be a fault, because the gospel recommends universal kindness, and this includes all private affections when they are consistent with the gospel and is far superior to them when they are contrary to it. But in fact, the Scripture strongly recommends private friendship, through both direct mentions and allusions to it. Scripture says that even our blessed Savior Himself distinguished the youngest of His

disciples with particular affection. I will therefore observe with most authors that there can be no true friendship except what is founded on virtuous principles and directed to virtuous purposes. To love a person who is not worthy of love is not a virtue, but an error. And do not have confidence in examples from people who are fundamentally unprincipled. There never was a true friend who was not an honest man. But besides this important truth, observe further that there is a kind of friendship that is founded neither on virtue nor vice, but mere weakness of mind. Some people have no resources in themselves and are obliged to turn to someone else. They lean upon this friend, and they seem like they could neither think, act, nor even exist without them. This sort of friendship is particularly found in royalty and people in government, and is generally called favoritism. But the same thing may be observed in all kinds of people, though, in the average person it is not so conspicuous. We can say that this kind of friendship is like a plant that appears to be of a valuable species but is not, and lacks the most valuable and essential qualities of the species it mimics. Such friendships are commonly formed by impulse or accident, and are usually short-lived, being easily dissolved by the same means. Valuable friendship is the result of good judgment as well as affection. It is one of the greatest comforts of life as well as one of the greatest ornaments to human nature. And its genuineness may be discerned by the following mark: that though friendship is particular, it is not exclusive. When there is a great and virtuous attachment to a person who deserves it, it will make a man not less, but more, friendly to all others as opportunity or circumstances shall call him to serve them.

Because I have so often encouraged you to excel in every area, maybe you will be surprised that I have said nothing or little on *politeness and grace in behavior*. Many talk of this, and some recent writings have highly praised it. I hope what I have already explained to you will lay the foundation for the most solid, valuable, and durable politeness. If you think of others as reason and religion require you, and treat them as it is your duty to do, you will not be far from well-polished behavior. More than that is external, well-mannered behavior, and it can never be learned except by interaction with the best company...

At any rate, sincerity in speech as well as conduct is not only an important duty of religion but a wise maxim for the conduct of life. I believe these two things are seldom if ever found separate from or opposed to each other.

My last advice to offer you is to preserve a sacred and unbreakable respect for *sincerity and truth*. Those who have received their education here, or at least who have completed it here, must know how much effort we have exerted to establish the universal and unalterable obligation of truth. I cannot here introduce the general subject, or prove the guilt, folly, and danger of deliberate selfish lies, but I warn you against the smaller breaches of truth now so very common. Examples of these include not being punctual to appointments; breaking a promise in small matters; falsehood as an act of kindness (as deceiving children, the sick, or others for their good); and deception intended as a temporary, "innocent" joke. Not one of these is free from sin before God, and they are much more harmful than many commonly suppose. Truth is such a very sacred

thing that you should avoid the very shadow of departure from it. Suppose, for example, that a man simply intends to express his present purpose to go to a certain place in the future, but says he will do it "tomorrow." If he has no real obligation nor any right to require it to be done "tomorrow," yet if he speaks like this often, he will acquire a reputation for lightness and instability. And that reputation will be a real disadvantage to him. Let me therefore recommend to you strict, universal, and scrupulous respect for truth. It will give dignity to your character. It will put order into your affairs. Truthfulness will create real confidence, so that whether you consider your own benefit, or your usefulness to others, it promises you the most assured success. I believe this virtue powerfully influences every other and draws you nearer to God Himself, Whose distinguishing character is that He will not and cannot lie.

