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Mrs. Cannon

SSXII

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The Last Lecture: Why it doesn't matter

This is it, the Last Lecture. The pinnacle event for every student at Maeser. The famous last words of dying Seniors who are about to pass away and be reborn into adulthood. It's the moment when a student steps up to the stage and, clothed in the robes of wisdom, imparts their final admonition. Every student dreams of this moment. It's what our whole education has been building up to. We have spent countless desperate hours in the shower pondering this one question: What will I say? Afterall, this is your only chance to leave behind a legacy, it's all or nothing, home run or strike out. Time to find out whether or not you will be remembered. So then what will I say? I say forget about the Last Lecture. It doesn't matter.

We as students have the misconception that life is all about defining moments. We think that legacy and worth is made manifest in the singularity of events like last lectures. We get so caught up in the words of Eminem, "The moment you own it, you better never let it go, you only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow, this opportunity comes once in a lifetime, yo!" We think that a perfect last lecture is the only way to do justice to the life we have had at Maeser. Don't get caught up in the lie.

It isn't about giving the last lecture, it never was and it never will be. Who cares what your famous last words are? Who cares if it's perfect? Who cares if you capture your whole life's experience in a five minute speech? You shouldn't. Because here's the thing: Anyone can *give* a

last lecture. But very few can *live* a last lecture. I could stand here and give the perfect speech about all the lessons I learned at Maeser. I could say: you will not get a good grade if you gamble during middle school science. True happiness comes from following passion. Buying a sailboat off of KSL, painting it orange, and calling it the Henry Hudson will get you an A on your Socratic project. And cherish your Maeser experience; you won't get another. These are important lessons, but anyone can teach those lessons by saying the exact same things I do. But only *I* can teach those lessons through what *I do*. Words have no power and authority unless you live what you say. It isn't the moment of giving the last lecture that matters, but the years after when you live it.

I don't care if you glean something profound from what I am saying in this speech, because I don't consider this to be my last lecture. Chances are that in a few weeks when you meet that brown eyed summer crush, you will forget everything I've said. And you know what, that's okay.

But I do have one wish: when the time comes when we meet again in 30 years, I want you to be able to look at my life and see who I have become through living the principles of truth, honour and virtue. I want you to see how I have lived the lessons I learned at Maeser. I want you to see how I've achieved true happiness through following my passions. I want you to observe me cherishing every moment, and I want you to notice how dedicating myself to learning continually, thinking critically and communicating effectively has changed my life. When you see all of this and who I've become, it is then that I want you to think, "Wow. Now that is a last lecture."

A legacy is not defined by the advice given in a last lecture. Legacy is defined by how one *lives* what they want to say. Look around. Do you remember the last thing one of your teachers said? I don't. When I look at someone like Mr. Simmons or Mrs. Cannon, I don't see a lecture they gave. I see people who teach, not for the money, but for the individual. I see people who care. That is their legacy. So I say to you, forget about the last lecture. You can only do justice to the lessons you've learned by *living* them. Be someone who, when people look at you, they see what you have become and they think, "Man, I want to leave a legacy like that." Forget about giving your last lecture, and just start living it.