



**[xastanford.org](http://xastanford.org)**

Welcome to the Stanford family! We hope that your time here is full of spiritual as well as intellectual growth. To that end, this ten day devotional is our gift to you. We hope it helps you start strong, and we'd like to help you finish strong as well.

We're Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship: a community of students earnestly following Jesus. Despite our name, we're not a fraternity or a sorority. Our name is Greek because the New Testament was written in Greek. It comes from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:20 — we are therefore Christ's (Chi) Ambassadors (Alpha). We often abbreviate our name as XA.

We have weekly worship services on campus and we sponsor life groups (Bible studies) throughout the week. We usually have one retreat-type event per quarter, and we occasionally baptize people in the Claw Fountain in front of the bookstore (9 baptisms last year - woot!).

The easiest way to get involved is to come to one of our **weekly meetings**. These gatherings are informal, given to humor, and deal with everything from relationships to the nature of truth.

**What:** Chi Alpha's weekly worship meeting

**When:** 7:30-9:00pm every Wednesday night.

**Where:** 370-370 (on the quad)

**What:** Worship followed by Bible-based teaching and prayer.

**Why:** So you can thrive spiritually at Stanford.

You can learn more about us at our website: [xastanford.org](http://xastanford.org)



Glen Davis is the pastor of Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship at Stanford University. He maintains a website at [glenandpaula.com](http://glenandpaula.com) which contains many of his other writings.

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The Bible is quoted from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.

## **Day One: Tuesday, September 14** **daniel@babylon.edu**

Stanford University—wow! If you're like most Christians, you're excited and nervous at the same time. You're excited because Stanford is such a great school, but you're nervous about what it will do to your faith. If that describes you, I encourage you to meditate on the story of Daniel.

When Babylon defeated Israel around 600 B.C. the Babylonians took promising young Israelis to Babylon for reeducation, and so Daniel was taken to Babylon to undergo a three year course of studies in Babylonian law, mythology, and culture designed to prepare him for a career of public service. (Daniel 1:1-4)

Think about that: as a young adult he underwent a three year course of study designed to groom him for success in a specific career. In other words, he was a student at the University of Babylon! So how did he do at Babylon U?

### **Daniel remained true to his values (Daniel 1:8-16)**

*<sup>8</sup>But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. <sup>9</sup>Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. <sup>10</sup>The palace master said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king." <sup>11</sup>Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: <sup>12</sup>"Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup>You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe." <sup>14</sup>So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup>At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations. <sup>16</sup>So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.*

### **Daniel excelled at his studies of pagan materials. (Daniel 1:17-20)**

*<sup>17</sup>To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams. <sup>18</sup>At the end of the time that the king had set for them to be brought in, the palace master brought them into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, <sup>19</sup>and the king spoke with them. And among them all, no one was found to compare with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they were stationed in the king's court. <sup>20</sup>In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.*

### **Daniel took risks for God (Daniel 2:12-19)**

*...the king flew into a violent rage and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. <sup>13</sup>The decree was issued, and the wise men were about to be executed; and they looked for Daniel and his companions, to execute them. <sup>14</sup>Then Daniel responded with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the king's chief executioner, who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon; <sup>15</sup>he asked Arioch, the royal official, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. <sup>16</sup>So Daniel went in and requested that the king give him time and he would tell the king the interpretation. <sup>17</sup>Then Daniel went to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>18</sup>and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon might not perish. <sup>19</sup>Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*

### **Resolve to emulate Daniel at Stanford!**

## **Day Two: Wednesday, September 15**

### **Praying With The Apostles**

One of the best ways to develop a talent is to study the masters at work and to imitate the things they do by instinct. When it comes to prayer, there are three Biblical role models for Christians: the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, and the prayers of the apostles. Most Christians are familiar with the first two, but the latter is often neglected.

Three key themes emerge when we examine the prayers of the apostles: a yearning for a deeper revelation of God, a passion for the spiritual growth of Christians, and a desire for fruitful evangelism. Pray these for yourself and pray them for the other people you are meeting on campus.

#### **Pray for God to Reveal Himself**

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." Ephesians 1:17-19a

*other prayers on this theme: Ephesians 3:16-19, Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-12*

#### **Pray For Personal Growth and Blessing**

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones." 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:12-13

*other prayers on this theme: Romans 15:13, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:23-24, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:11-12, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:2,3*

#### **Pray for Fruitful Evangelism**

"Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup>Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." Colossians 4:3-4

*other prayers on this theme: Acts 4:24b-30, Ephesians 6:19, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:1-5*

Imitate the masters: use these apostolic prayers as a template for your own prayers. If you're not sure what that would look like, don't overthink it. Simply take one of these passages, think of a friend, and pray for that friend by name and change the sentences in a way that makes the most grammatical sense and throw a little bit of your own personality into it. If you were to pray for me to be effective in evangelism, for example, you could pray something like this, "Lord, I pray for Glen – open a door for him to share the gospel and then once that door is open give him the boldness and wisdom to proclaim it clearly."

## **Day Three: Thursday, September 16**

### **The Grid of Application**

Stanford is going to train you to be very clever. You'll become a master at deconstructing texts and spouting all sorts of theoretical mumbo jumbo, so take a moment to remember that it's no good to understand the Bible without obeying the Bible. James warns us, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

Frankly, figuring out how to obey the Bible is not that hard – even in confusing passages there are usually a few clear ideas we can latch onto. In fact, the Bible gives us a simple tool for figuring out how to obey the Bible in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3.16: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

This verse gives us four categories that describe how the Bible can be useful to us: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. They are related; in fact, they can be grouped on a grid with two axes: belief and behavior, positive and negative

	<b>Belief</b>	<b>Behavior</b>
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Teaching</b> Is there something I should believe based on this passage?	<b>Training in Righteousness</b> Is there a habit I should cultivate based on this passage?
<b>Negative</b>	<b>Correcting</b> Is there a belief I should abandon based on this passage?	<b>Rebuking</b> Is there a behavior I should stop or change based on this passage?

Take a moment to be sure you see how the verse maps onto this grid. It's one of the most helpful Bible study techniques you'll come across.

So when you read the Bible, don't despise understanding - use all the tools and techniques that your classes will equip you with. But don't settle for understanding – move on towards obedience. Otherwise, you're like a fool who looks in the mirror and sees a smudge on your cheek, but forgets to wipe it off as soon as you turn away.

Don't be that guy.

## **Day Four: Friday, September 17**

### **Cultivate The Habits of Faith**

Now that you're at college, you need to take responsibility for your spiritual health. That means lots of things, but three are central: you must motivate yourself, you must meditate on Scripture, and you must spend time in prayer.

#### **You Must Motivate Yourself**

Perhaps you have relied on your parents or a minister to keep you motivated in your faith, but that won't carry you through college. You must learn, with the Psalmist, to preach to yourself. Three times in the Psalms we see him motivating himself with the exact same words: "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God" (Psalm 42:5, 42:11, 43:5). You must develop this habit – spend less time being driven by your emotions and spend more time driving them.

#### **You Must Meditate on Scripture**

There is an enormous difference between Christian meditation and meditation in the Eastern religions. In the Eastern religions, meditation is about emptying your mind. In Christian meditation, the goal is to fill your mind with Biblical truth and think about it over and over again. You already know how to meditate because you know how to worry. When you worry you think about a problem over and over again. Meditating is doing just that, except instead of thinking repeatedly about something negative you think repeatedly about God's truth. The simplest way to do this is to read the Bible every morning and then reflect on it throughout the day. The very first Psalm celebrates this practice in its portrayal of a righteous person whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:2). Other passages that model meditation are Joshua 1:8, Psalm 77:12, and large parts of Psalm 119. In the New Testament, we see the practice described in Colossians 3:1-2 and Philippians 4:8.

#### **You Must Spend Time in Prayer**

Prayer is one of the great privileges of the Christian life. We have already spoken of learning prayer from the apostles – now the key is to do it. Hebrews 4:16 reminds us to "come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most" (NLT).

#### **Bundle These Together Into a Daily Appointment with God**

Many Christians find that making a daily appointment with God to pursue these priorities is very helpful. Read the Bible and meditate upon it, and then use that meditation as the foundation for your prayer. This period is called different things by different Christians (devotional time, quiet time, morning prayers, etc). The name doesn't matter, but the practice does.

Some Christians also find it helpful to use a guidebook such as the one you are currently holding in your hand. If you would like a guide to take you beyond these first few days on campus, search the internet for "Carson For the Love of God pdf" and you will find an excellent, free resource by a top-notch Bible scholar. If you don't want the commentary and would prefer a simple Bible-reading plan, visit [bibleplans.org](http://bibleplans.org)

## **Day Five: Saturday, September 18**

### **Humble Gratitude**

Stanford is a wonderful place, but one of its pernicious effects will be to nurture your pride. Always remember that “God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). And so if you want to experience God’s grace, you need to resist the creeping pride that Stanford will develop in you. The best antidote to pride is gratitude. It is hard to be arrogant when you remember that the talents you boast in are merely gifts – gifts that could as easily have been given to someone else.

The British writer G.K. Chesterton once wrote a little poem along this theme:

You say grace before meals.  
All right.  
But I say grace before the concert and the opera,  
and grace before the play and pantomime,  
and grace before I open a book,  
and grace before sketching, painting,  
Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing,  
and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

And so right now resolve to give thanks before you walk across campus. Resolve to give thanks before you go to class. Give thanks before you spend time with your friends. Give thanks before... everything.

Today, meditate on 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:18: “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Give thanks, and thereby cultivate gratitude. And then you will receive grace upon grace from the Father.

### **Remember To Go To Church Tomorrow**

Keep your Sunday morning habit going while you’re at Stanford. You can find a list of congregations close to campus at [xastanford.org](http://xastanford.org), but for this Sunday we have a special invitation for you.

Once a year Chi Alpha hosts an on-campus Sunday morning service as part of reFARmation, our back-to-school kickoff for our returning students. You’re welcome to join us. We’ll be on the third floor of Old Union at Sunday morning 10am. You’ll need to take the elevator next to the Axe and Palm to the top – the stairs don’t go all the way. Turn left once you’re out of the elevator. Hope you can worship with us! Email [glen.davis@gmail.com](mailto:glen.davis@gmail.com) if you have any questions. You can also text him at 650-380-0896

## **Day Six: Sunday, September 19**

### **How To Keep A High Spiritual GPA at Stanford**

By and large, three relationships will determine whether you thrive or flounder at Stanford: your relationship to God (G), to your peers (P), and to the authorities in your life (A). Think of your health in these areas as your spiritual GPA.

#### **God**

Jesus commanded us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). This is the first and greatest commandment. Everything else in the Bible is built upon this foundation. We can do more than love God like some admirer from afar – we can also know God. In fact, that’s the precondition of being a Christian! John 17:3 tells us that “this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” This is an ongoing relationship with God. “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:3). We cultivate this relationship by prayer and meditating on the Bible.

#### **Peers**

You’ve met a lot of people at Stanford and you’re in the midst of forming the friendships that will carry you through the rest of this year. Remember the Bible’s warnings:

- “Don’t fool yourselves. Bad friends will destroy you.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:33, CEV)
- “Wise friends make you wise, but you hurt yourself by going around with fools.” (Proverbs 13:20, CEV)

Some of the friends you make in college will serve in your wedding. They will visit you on family vacations. You will influence one another for years to come. Choose them wisely.

This doesn’t mean that you should be standoffish or rude with people whose choices you disapprove of. The Bible is quite clear that we are to be kind and hospitable people; in fact, we are even to show love to people bent on our destruction (Luke 6:35). But the Bible is also clear that you should be discerning about who you let into your inner circle. Who will you grant the privilege of influencing your choices and values?

#### **Authority**

There are lots of reasons to become deeply involved in Christian community quickly, but one I want to emphasize now is the need for spiritual authority in your life. You need a community that will preach God’s truth to you courageously and compassionately and that will confront you when you make mistakes. Hebrews 13:17 commands us to “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” This one is easy to lose track of in the hustle and bustle of NSO – make it a priority!

#### **What’s Your GPA?**

If you haven’t done it, give yourself a grade in each category. Seriously. You know how it works. A, B, C, D, F. Even throw in a plus or a minus if you want to. Now calculate your spiritual GPA. If many people at NSO were honest, it would be the lowest GPA they’ve ever laid eyes upon... and yet it is the only GPA that matters in the long run.



## **Day Seven: Monday, September 20**

### **Babylon and the Beast**

The book of Revelation was written to help Christians live in a culture hostile to the faith. It encourages us by showing us what happens at the end (Jesus wins), and it instructs us by showing us how we must live in the present (by remaining faithful unto death).

There are two key enemies in the middle part of the book: a fearsome monster called the Beast and a beautiful prostitute called Babylon. They represent the two ways that Satan sabotages God's work: intimidation (the Beast) and seduction (Babylon). Not only are these Satan's main strategies against the church, they are also Satan's main strategies against you. Satan will use both the stick and the carrot to destroy you.

#### **Do Not Be Intimidated**

Intimidation begins early at Stanford – you quickly learn that certain views are just uncool. You learn that smart people think a certain way about subjects x, y, and z. And you want to seem smart, don't you?

It's a lie. It's nothing more than peer pressure and intimidation. Meditate on Revelation 21:7-8, where we read

<sup>7</sup>Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. <sup>8</sup>But as for the **cowardly**, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” (NRSV)

Always remember that cowards are the first lot thrown into hell. Do not be intimidated, for “the one that is in you is greater than the one that is in the world” (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:4).

#### **Do Not Be Seduced**

Seduction also begins early at Stanford – the party scene ramps up quickly and people invite you to do things with them. Fun things. Things that your parents will never find out about. Things that your pastor will never know about. What will you do?

Revelation 18:4 warns us, “come out of her, my people.” The Bible is very clear that we should do our best to avoid temptation – Jesus himself told us to pray for that very thing in the Lord's prayer: “lead us not into temptation.” That means that not only should you avoid certain social scenes, you should also avoid being put into situations where you are likely to be pressured to go.

#### **Resist the Beast and Flee Babylon**

So at Stanford this year, resist the Beast and flee Babylon. Exercise courage in the face of intimidation and walk with wisdom in the presence of temptation. And then, as Revelation 21:14 promises, you will be given “the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

## **Day Eight: Tuesday, September 21**

### **What Can Happen At Stanford**

In Acts 19:8-10, we read about a remarkable episode on Paul's life:

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup>But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup>This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Paul ministered in an established (and very non-Christian) educational institution and was able to influence an entire region for Christ.

How is this possible? Places like the lecture hall of Tyrannus (and also places like Stanford) act as magnets – they draw people from far away to come and have their deepest beliefs challenged. And then they go back home and bring their new ideas with them.

It's missions in reverse.

Your time at Stanford is not just about you and your own personal development – it's also about what you can do for Christ and his Kingdom. God brought you to Stanford to prepare you for His long-term plan in your life and also to use you to accomplish His long-term plan in the lives of others.

Be a bold and clear witness for Christ here. Link arms with a community of faith-filled companions who will labor alongside you in the service of the King. Leave a legacy at Stanford.

And then perhaps someday you will look back and say, "Like Paul in the lecture halls of Tyrannus, I had discussions daily in the lecture halls of Stanford. And all the people from China, from India, from Saudi Arabia, from Sweden, from Argentina, from Nigeria, have heard the word of the Lord as a result."

May it be so.

## **Day Nine: Wednesday, September 22**

### **How To Handle Temptation**

If you have not yet faced temptation at Stanford, you haven't been paying attention. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:12-14, Paul gives us practical advice for handling temptation.

#### **Remember You Are Vulnerable**

*<sup>12</sup>So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*

"A buffalo can't see its own butt" – according to one of my friends that is a Kenyan proverb. Whether it is or not, it is profoundly true. We all have weak, ugly places that we can't see – and those are the places that predators attack. If you think you're super-Christian, you are in more danger than you can possibly imagine. You have a butt, and there is a roaring lion waiting to pounce on it (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8).

#### **Realize You're Not An Exception**

*<sup>13</sup>No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.*

When we face temptation, we begin the rationalization process. In fact, Stanford students are quite good at rationalization. The same skills that help you blow smoke on an essay will help you justify your sin. "I've worked really hard – I deserve this." "I have a genetic predisposition – I can't help myself." "Well – the circumstances are pretty unique here – maybe it's usually a sin but not right now."

You're not an exception and the situation you are facing is not all that exceptional – you have to live by the same rules as everyone else.

#### **Believe God Is With You**

*And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

While tempted you will feel cut off from God. You are not. The same Jesus who withstood Satan's wiles in the wilderness is standing with you in support. He is with you in two ways: (a) actively limiting the temptation's intensity and (b) providing you with an escape route.

#### **Run Like Crazy**

*<sup>14</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*

If the reference to idolatry seems out of place to you, just think of idolatry as the primal sin underneath other sins. Paul is warning us not to merely fight against temptation – we should get away from it. Why? Because if you remain in the presence of temptation you must choose to remain pure over and over again, whereas the choice to leave temptation needs to be made only once. We delude ourselves into thinking that we are stronger than we are, and we forget that temptation is like a river – given enough time it will erode the most rocklike will. So get while the gettin's good.

#### **SPECIAL REMINDER**

Don't forget that Chi Alpha's first meeting is tonight at 7:30pm in 370-370. Map and more info at [xastanford.org](http://xastanford.org). You'll be one of many new students attending, so you'll feel right at home!

## **Day Ten: Thursday, September 23**

### **Preach The Gospel To Yourself Every Day**

You got into Stanford because you're an achiever. You do things well and you get rewarded for it. That's a wonderful trait to have, but it means that you are especially susceptible to relying on yourself instead of relying on God.

You can tell you are relying on yourself when you begin to fixate on the rules. Christianity is not rule-following. If you're only being dutiful, you're missing the point. Christianity builds duty upon delight. Without delight, you will never sustain your duty.

Another way of saying this is John 1:17, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Law is not sufficient. We must also have grace and truth. Many Christians neglect grace and focus on truth alone, but truth without grace collapses into a new law.

What is grace? Grace is related to forgiveness but goes beyond it. Forgiveness means not receiving a penalty that you deserve – and we certainly receive forgiveness in Christ! But we also receive grace. Grace is receiving something good that you don't deserve. Forgiveness is a police officer not giving you a ticket when you were caught speeding – grace is that same police officer also giving you a GPS and installing it himself.

Think about grace constantly. Preach the gospel to yourself every day, because believing the gospel is not just the way we become Christians, it is also the way we grow in Christ. There are many passages in the Bible that drive this theme home, but these are especially clear. Meditate on them.

- Titus 2:11-14: For **the grace of God** that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup>*It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness* and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.
- Galatians 3:1-3: You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup>I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? <sup>3</sup>Are you so foolish? ***After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?***
- Acts 20:32 - Now I commit you to God and to **the word of his grace, which can build you up** and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
- Colossians 2:6-7 - So then, ***just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him***, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

And don't just meditate on these passages once – make them the cornerstone of your Christian walk. Preach the gospel to yourself every day and your soul will flourish – and so will your ability to share your faith with others. Because the simple truth is that you will never preach the gospel better to your friends than you preach the gospel to yourself.

And do not let these truths be abstract or remote from your day-to-day existence at Stanford. Your worth is not determined by your grades. The only evaluation of your performance that truly matters has been pronounced by God at Calvary.