

## 2010 Valedictorian Speech – Jared Van Huizen

Making the beginning of a speech is always the toughest part for me. The difficulty only increases when making an address to the students, teachers and family of Quinte Christian and its surrounding community. I am very glad that all of you could be here; this is such a wonderful occasion and I'm happy that you took time to celebrate with my class at our graduation. But I'm also happy for the incredible amount of support that you have given to us. From small to grand ways, you, our families, friends, teachers, and leaders have been there for us. You have encouraged us through words and prayer, you always were there to give us a pat on the back and say 'good job!'. But you also were there saying 'great kid, don't get cocky' so that we didn't get too ahead of ourselves. As we grew these last four years we were blessed with such an amazing support group, and while we may have not always told you, I know that we're extremely grateful for all that you've done.

I remember back in September of this past year I was already looking forward to graduation, and I was hoping that I would get the chance to be valedictorian. I had begun trying to think of something meaningful that I could say and I knew it wouldn't be easy. To succinctly say something both insightful and inspiring on behalf of the class is a big task and if everyone in the class came up here they would say something different. Someone might compare our high school life to star wars or some movie, another person might make a few jokes before going into the deep material, someone would undoubtedly wax nostalgic on all the great memories that we've shared. The point is that I wish that all of my class had an opportunity like this, and I sincerely hope that I can say something that you want to hear.

If you know me well you know that I'm not one to reflect on the past a great deal. I much prefer to look ahead at what's to come. That said, I am thoroughly surprised at the incredible time that I have had at Quinte Christian. I have made some lasting friendships while in high school, and I think that it's a testament to the friendliness of our school that I could still make new friends even just a month ago. I think everyone in our class really appreciates the teachers of this school as well. The teachers aren't really just teachers anymore; they have become so much more, and I'm sure some of us might even have made a friend in a teacher.

When I was writing this speech it was around the same time as the television show *Lost* aired its final episode. It was sort of a surprising ending in that while the overall setting and mythology left a lot of open questions, the characters themselves all reached a satisfying resolution. In a way I'm hoping that I can look back on my high school life and see similarities to that. My classmates and I were thrust into this new setting where some strange things happened that we didn't always understand, but we persevered. We encountered similar themes to the show *Lost*, like science vs. faith, good vs. evil, and maybe we even had a love triangle or two. But through all that our writer and director never lost focus of the end goal. Like our verse says; God knew the plan for our high school journey, and he knows the plan for the next season. Unlike many television directors, God has planned the entire show out from the beginning. Although we don't always have the script to look at, there are a few things that we can do to prepare for the next season. An actor who only practises alone won't be ready when working with other actors. As you go off into work, college and university I cannot stress this point enough;

find other Christians to meet regularly with. Going to church while at university is tough, and I don't expect you to go every Sunday, but you stand a very good chance at falling away from God while at post secondary education. Finding at least one other Christian friend can make all the difference in the world. But we shouldn't also forget about the Bible. An actor who never reads his lines won't be ready for a performance. Our friends can only go so far before we'll need the word of God to keep us going. We've been blessed going to a Christian high school but in the fall when most of you are at college and university we will be in danger of losing our faith. We will also need the praying support of our family and friends. Pray for your sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and friends, that they will stay committed to God. This is the one important thing I hope will stick with you after I've finished speaking.

Earlier I said that making the opening of a speech was the toughest part of writing a speech, but writing the ending comes in a close second. I need to wrap up everything I just said in a nice little package and hopefully end things on a good note. I know I've been so blessed to have grown up in a Christian home, with Christian teachers and a church and Christian friends, and many other people who were there for me when I wanted to talk about problems I was facing. When we leave from here we'll be gaining a lot of independence but you will still need people to rely on. After the credits roll tonight we will still be the same people, we will still need the help of God, our family and friends, but also the help of the new communities that we will become apart of. I will try and pray for all of you, and I hope that you can pray for your classmate's future too. With that said, I think I would like to close off with one last piece of wisdom. Whatever Gods plan for each of us ends up being I want to remind you of the words of a wise old man named Ben. May the Force be wi--- I'm only teasing, God bless you all.