

Bethany Christian Schools - 2023 Commencement - May 28

Student Speeches

- **Jessa Caffee**

We stand here today, as two current seniors of Bethany Christian High School. In just a few short minutes, we will turn our tassels from right to left, and thereby pronounced graduates of Bethany Christian. Today we come together to celebrate how much progress we've made, not only in our academic careers, but our athletic, emotional, and spiritual journeys. Although these are meant to be celebrated, we also commemorate the hard work and toil that brought us here; the sleepless nights, the 2's on tests, the friendship struggles, and the countless hours spent reading Michael's assigned summer reading. We thank each and every one of our parents, teachers, friends, mentors, and peers that have brought us here.

- **Cameron Heinisch**

And so we say, Congratulations to each and every member of the Class of 2023. Today is an exciting day for all of us. However, it's also very bittersweet. We mark today a pretty large loss: an expected loss, but still a loss nonetheless. Most of us are leaving behind at least four shared years of friends, teachers, memories, antics, and most importantly, hard work. While it is sad, I think it's ironically a good loss. In places of the opportunities and the people that we lose, we're going to gain even more; new friends, new teachers, new coworkers, new memories, new experiences, new work, new hobbies. The possibilities from this point on are nearly endless. So yes, today is understandably bittersweet, but the ensuing celebration is more than warranted.

- **Jessa:**

We all understand that everything in life has a beginning and an end, including our high school education. We began freshman year, whether at Bethany or not, wide eyed, some brimming with excitement at the possibilities to come, while others dreaded high school and the larger workload that comes with it. After four years, we complete high school, our heads stuffed full of knowledge, anxious to snatch our diplomas and reach another milestone. You see, life is not like the infinity card at an arcade in Pigeon Forge, on our senior trip, being passed around throughout the senior class, taking advantage of its somehow glitched state to access unlimited tries at claw machines. We do not have endless swipes for life, however appealing that may sound. We don't always have extra tries or do-overs at friendships, relationships, or opportunities. So now, we head off to college, or the workforce, but that too will change. We collectively know firsthand that life is sacred and delicate, and must not be taken for granted. So don't forget to Take advantage of the time we still have together, even just today, soaking up every last bit of highschool, and the beautiful friendships that we created together.

- **Cameron**

This delicate nature makes it sound like life is gonna be scary. I think there's some truth in that. For example, I'm still scared to call restaurants and make reservations; I'm sure most of my classmates share that feeling. While life right now may seem scary, the good news is that it doesn't really come with any limits. Each of us is going to be free to pursue whatever we'd like and work to accomplish anything we want to. This freedom should allow us to challenge ourselves. I encourage all of you to try something outside of your comfort zone next year. Eat new food, play new video games, study new topics, talk to new people.

Life is an adventure, and we shouldn't take it for granted by doing the same thing every day. It helps us that we've been so thoroughly challenged here at Bethany. Some of these challenges have been useful, and others, which shall remain nameless, have just felt like busy work. Even though we won't remember every single detail we've learned, it's good that we've faced adversity because this experience will help us overcome greater obstacles later in life.

- **Jessa**

Our obstacles that we have had to tackle within the last few years are taking us all to new and exciting places. Some staying close to home at Goshen, IUSB, and Ivy Tech, others leaving the state to Hesston, EMU, Alfred University, North Park University, Bentley, and more going to new parts of Indiana like Indiana Wesleyan, Valparaiso, Purdue, Indiana University, Depauw, Butler, and a few taking a gap year and working. I have great confidence that each and every one of you will create new communities that rival those of our beautiful Bethany community and class. I say this not to belittle our humble Bethany, but to acknowledge that Bethany has prepared us well to make new friends, go to new places, and find your place in a new territory.

- **Cameron**

But no matter where you go or what you do in life, this class is going to be bonded forever. None of us will forget the memories that we've made in these hallways, and the years we've spent studying, talking, and growing. The bond that unites us is similar to that of a family. I bet every graduate here would be willing to help me or Jessa at 1:00 at night if either of us got a flat tire. That is a testament not to us, but to the love and support that each of you exhibit on a daily basis. Spending time with all of you for the last four years, we truly feel like we've felt loved in every class at every step. I don't think any of us have to wonder "who we're gonna call," because this class will always be there for each other. Richard exhibited this love very well. He was such a caring young man, and our class has suffered greatly without him. I know for many of us, there's not a day that goes by where we don't miss his laugh and his love. His smile could brighten up anybody's day, and his humorous

mischievous will be a lasting memory for most of us. He has inspired many of us to live lives full of the love that he so effortlessly spread upon us. We will always remember Richard.

- **Jessa**

I can second Cameron's feeling of faithful love and support within our class and community. I think a verse that demonstrates this love perfectly would be 1 John 4:8: "Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God." Bethany last year felt very intimidating at first, but eventually, within just the few first weeks, I felt as though I belonged. The kindness, respect, and inclusion that I felt was wonderful. Entering your junior year is hard enough, but doing so at a new school is even scarier. It was not just my classmates and peers that made this transition somewhat flawless; I have the staff, administration, and teachers to thank for that. Hank checked in on me regularly, asking me how I was doing, and wanting honest answers, all while , cracking jokes to lighten the mood. My teachers were so great. I did not feel singled out being a new student, and I did not feel out of place. They treated me just like everyone else, like I was already accepted. KP, our school counselor, and my basketball coach, was also a huge help in my transition, and offered advice, asked questions, and gave great hugs. I know that the teachers and staff are this way to many of my other classmates. Renae and Josh have been incredible sponsors, and take time out of their already strenuous and busy lives to intentionally connect with our class, get to know us on a personal level, and love us well. Although we may have had frustrations with our schoolwork from their classes, I never questioned their care or love for me. I am positive that my classmates feel the same.

- **Cameron**

Now, I am going to take some time to reciprocate that love that you guys have shown me and Jessa. Let me say, we are immensely proud of every graduate sitting here today. A “good job” couldn’t even come close to describing my emotions looking out into the crowd of my classmates, but it’s the only English phrase that will come close. It is finally our time to celebrate. Four long years of hard work at Bethany, and maybe elsewhere, have paid off, and we’re preparing to make our biggest change yet. This change will not be easy, but it will be limitless to our wildest dreams. We can’t do everything, but I bet we can try and do just about anything we want. So don’t walk out of this gym feeling as if your life has ended and you should feel sad, because let me tell you, this is only the beginning.