



## VALEDICTORY ADDRESS | Friday 07 February 2020

---

Deputy Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, faculty, graduates and their guests.

I am honoured and grateful to be standing here tonight to give the valedictory speech on behalf of my fellow graduates. Those of us graduating tonight have much to celebrate and to be thankful for. I would love to thank all our guests for joining us on this special occasion.

Graduates, congratulations! Let's enjoy this moment and honour our families and friends as we celebrate this learning journey. For each of us, it is a time to reflect on the journey that we have been on, the steps that we have taken to arrive here and the friendships that we have formed with one another along the way. I am sure we can all say that we are very grateful to be one of the final graduates to have studied through the Catalyst program.

Reflecting over the past year we have had a great number of opportunities and experiences that have shaped not just our understanding of faith but also our identity. The value of our cross-cultural immersion trips and industry speakers that continue to influence, challenge and drive us into the future ahead. Remember - Let's not stop learning; we must apply this knowledge to new contexts of life and seek answers to those questions that we will continue to wrestle with. Importantly, never stop pursuing God.

Last year I was confronted with this saying, "are you 'following' or 'believing' in Jesus? Over the hub sessions, many of the industry speakers in some way answered this question for me. I have learnt that following Jesus is a journey, a long life journey, which involves rhythms, movement and practice. We as believers are practicing the way of Jesus; we see how rewarding it is to only believe in Him. In my observation of studying the life of Jesus, I saw what makes a crazy Jesus lover stand out from the rest, it comes down to three foundational postures. Firstly, having the posture of surrender, letting God have control of yourself and your life. Secondly, being generous and having the posture of an open-hand attitude approach in a closed fist culture. Finally, servant leadership, having the desire to live a focused life of serving others. These foundational postures are something that believers noticed in the life that Jesus lived.

My experience at the University of Divinity has taught me many things, and in several ways, I am a vastly different person today than I was when I entered my first class last year.

One of the most notable changes that I have experienced has been the transformation of my understanding of Christian leadership. The nature of Catalyst has provided me and other graduates a consistent way to reflect through the big, varying experiences that have helped shape our perspectives. For me everything has changed, my understanding of creation, redemption, God and everything in between. Having walked



alongside many of you over the last year, I trust that our experiences have been similar. Graduates, with this gift of education that we have, now the greater challenge is to use it. With this New Year ahead, remember to articulate deeply, engage in the Word and to serve wider than your faith community – you can only grow.

I would like to end once again with gratitude. On behalf of all graduates, I thank the faculty who have supported us throughout our study, those who are here and those who are absent. No one succeeds without the help of the faculty. We were blessed to have passionate and encouraging lecturers that were also inspiring mentors. Although we only spent little time together during each semester, they never hesitated to give us a helping hand when we encountered difficulties in our studies.

Lastly, we owe a particular personal thanks to our parents, families, partners, and friends. Thank you for all the ongoing love, support, and encouragement.

I'd like to close by echoing Colossians 3:23 as a reminder that, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord."

---

**Mikaela Grace Stewart, Diploma in Theology, Stirling Theological College**



Office of the Vice-Chancellor  
**University of Divinity**  
21 Highbury Grove, Kew, Victoria 3101  
Australia  
[www.divinity.edu.au](http://www.divinity.edu.au)