

This We Believe

The Personal Philosophies of the Remarkable Men
and Women from Baker University and the
Lawrence Senior Center



Barbara Willis & Katey Chandler

“I wish for the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

A lot can be drawn from a quote like that. It can be applied to virtually any human interaction. Hate your job? Courage. Lost a close friend? Serenity. Trying to decide what to eat for breakfast? Well, maybe not the last one. Life comes in weird shapes and unexpected sizes and we just need to find our own way to deal with the circumstances life hands us. Day to day, relationship to relationship, true grace comes from the acknowledgement of what we know we cannot control. We believe that a fulfilled life and legacy comes from touching those we cross paths with and not letting the little things stand in our way.

We believe you don't need a mansion with fifty servants to tend to your garden to know status in life. Status comes from the relationships with neighbors, family and friends. Everyone is first a stranger, until you extend your hand, and then they become family. There is no need to keep a distance, shrug a shoulder, or turn a head away from someone you meet when you have the ability to bring a new perspective and love into their life. It isn't craving the reciprocated gesture or needing to get your face on television for a donation to a homeless shelter; it's about the good in your heart and using what you have to give to others.

There is much to be said for taking each day as it comes, and not having to dramatize the ups and downs in life's path. Count the blessings, reflect on the obstacles life throws at you and recognize the good that will grow from them. Somewhere along the line we must be accept the things that cannot be changed, but use all we are to influence change in the world. We believe this can be done through reaching out to others, even in the minutest of ways. It's important to take care of responsibilities earnestly, be ready to help each other as much as we can, and to be available to our family members for support. Whether supporting young adults in their quest for independence, building one's own financial security, or caring for aging adults, the strong and steady acceptance of what each day brings is really a blessing in life.

How important is it for us to build on counting our blessings? Making lemonade from lemons? Not "sweating the small stuff" that life throws at us? The legacy of a life is measured by taking care of family matters, which manifests into the lives of generations to follow. More may be remembered by our caring and kindness, than that of a chiseling of names on a building, where the name will soon be a cold memory.





Kyle Weinmaster, Matt Griffin, & Chuck Benedict

Love is a powerful and unpredictable force in a person's life. It can come unexpectedly and change a person's life for better or for worse and for myself the validity behind this truth has been experienced more than once.

The first time I encountered love it lasted for almost thirty-four years. My passion for dancing led me on a path in finding my first true love, from which I immediately knew at the age of twenty-two I would never love somebody as much as I loved her. For many the thought of love at first sight remains only a myth, but I am a living breathing creature who has made this myth into a reality. This reality that I speak of came true on June, 20 1948 as I married Joyce who became my lifelong sweetie. The bond that was forged between us was stronger than love itself as our passion for each other only grew stronger through time. However on June, 29 1982, after five and a half years of battling pancreatic cancer, the bond that we had forged had been broken through the reality that all must face eventually, death. With the passing of my sweetie my heart had been shattered along with the thought of ever loving someone again.

For several months I felt emptiness inside of me that lead to the feeling of loneliness and depression. It was as if food had lost it's taste and colors were absent, and the meaning of life had lost all purpose. I knew from that point on

that the life I had once lived would never be the same. God had taken my wife for some purpose that is unknown to me, but mine was spared, realizing that God had another purpose that was intended for me. This purpose came unexpectedly several months later when I was signing up for a weekly night dance class that had led me to meet a 5'8 blonde with a personality that immediately grabbed my attention. A feeling that I thought that I would never feel again overwhelmed me the more I got to know this woman. As we spent more and more time together my heart began to unthaw, as I realized that I could live once again. I had been blessed to experience love for a second time and the thought of that was amazing. Maggie, short for Marilyn the Magnificent blessed me with twenty-five more years of love. However, the bond that we forged together had been broken by death once again.

I have lived my life to the fullest from which I do not blame the lord in his purpose in taking my two wives within my lifetime. I was blessed with the opportunity to care and love not once, but twice for two women who have made my life worth living. Love is a journey that can create either happiness or sorrow in a person's life, but its power is what gives life meaning and purpose and for this reason alone I believe in the power of love.





Katie Sellers, Callee Souders, & Katy Beard

We believe that in order to age properly you must strive to keep learning whether it is formal classes, travel, or active listening to other's opinions. When you stop learning you die.

From marching in the Civil Rights movements to watching the Twin Towers fall and its aftermath, our experiences have shaped how we view the world and what matters most. It was these two historical events that helped us see the commonality amongst our age gap and brought us together. We can see how even event has impacted not only the world but our daily lives and how those who lived before us laid the groundwork that allowed us to push through adversity.

We are always a student of life. From early childhood to the elder years, one learns from friendships, family, teachers, peers, and the current events around us. Through interactions within each of these groups we developed morals, values, feelings, fears, truths, and love. It's through these life lessons that we have developed into the women we are today.

The only thing we feel we have left to do is to live by example because we are not going out to chase the world unless circumstances arise. The hardest thing is to know what is coming, but the easy part is knowing that we have the background to steer us in the right direction.

Differences in what we hope we will achieve and what we want to leave behind, versus reflecting back on our lives and determining what was our greatest achievement. Every decade we want to be able to look back and see something we have accomplished. If we can't then what have we lived for?

We believe that through this experience we have been able to revisit traditions and values that may have been lost or shifted throughout the generations. By participating in this activity we are able to bridge the gap between generations, providing a new outlook on how we wish to approach our lives.

To sum up our outlook on life is best explained within this quote, "*Enjoy life...it has an expiration date*" –Anonymous.





Charles Hill, Dylan Kuhlman, & Stacy Yowell

Man faces a never ending struggle to live morally, grow mentally, and interact peacefully with fellow humans.

Some people use God and religious practices to define their morality, others are confident they can live a moral life without religion. For us, we use our religious beliefs as a moral compass that places us within boundaries of what is morally acceptable. Man has free will which allows him to choose or deny or accept moral beliefs.

Man has a large, complex brain which has unlimited potential of knowledge and decision-making capability. Men and women hardly ever remain at the same, stagnant level, but hopefully grow and seldom deteriorate. We believe that it is necessary to learn something new each day in order to avoid stagnation. Those who do not make the effort to grow mentally “drop-out” of society. Not only learning language is important, but skills that can be improved on for many days to come.

We would like to think that all of society is good, but man does have evil. A combination of our beliefs, knowledge, and morals lead us to interact peacefully. Greed, desire, misunderstandings, and jealousy are hypocrites of interact peacefully with one another.

Man has a strong will to live because we strive to live within our morals, increase our knowledge, and live peacefully with our neighbor; however one defines those wills by exercising free will.





Tanner Gleason & Art Lamb

When Art and I sat down to talk about this topic we came to the conclusion that we both believe in playing by the rules. Whether written or unwritten, rules govern our lives and they set guidelines as to how people in a civilized society should live and interact with others. The concept of “playing by the rules” correlates highly with honesty, respectability, and morality. Human beings are subjected to rules in all aspects of their lives whether it be through school, through work, and probably most prevalently, through religion. Without rules, the world would be chaos and nobody would be able to determine the difference between right and wrong. However, with this thought comes the problem of deciding what rules promote equality amongst our society. Acceptable boundaries are essential and should direct every aspect of life. But why is it that some people can constantly live outside these boundaries without it having a direct impact on their conscience and their lives. What has their life been like that they find it acceptable to not play by the rules? In life is it important to “do whatever you can” to be successful even if you have to break the rules to do it? There is already too much dishonesty in this world that happens because people decide to break the rules. When do people lose their conscience and no longer play by the rules?

I have been raised to believe in what the Bible says. From the time I was very young, the values, morals, and rules set forth in the teachings of the scriptures have been reinforced in my life by my parents, grandparents, the community and by church in which I was raised. So, what does the Bible say? Ten Commandments are an example of a set of rules that address human behaviors that include stealing, murder, infidelity, idolatry, and respect.

Having been lead in a religious lifestyle, I believe that I should honor these rules. To me, it would be a scary thought knowing I lived by breaking rules, and then had to answer to the judgment that will ultimately determine my “afterlife.” Maybe people who hold their values in check with their faith truly do live a better life because they play by the rules. I try to follow the rules set forth by my religion as closely as possible, but everybody makes mistakes and every once and a while we find ourselves breaking the rules. The difference is that there are the people that recognize what they are doing is wrong and there are people who continually decide to make their own rules and disregard authority in their lives.

Sadly enough, it seems that society has modified the rules to meet the needs of certain groups of people including sports figures, drug lords, gangs, politicians, and it appears that broken rules were overlooked to patronize these groups. I often wonder what holds them accountable to the law, and to their own conscience. Additionally, I wonder what is wrong with a world that constantly changes rules because they have been broken by people who are considered important. If the basic freedoms that Americans earn by being citizens were equal among all citizens, then those of us who choose to play by the rules should not constantly be infringed upon by others who choose not to play by the rules while they are being protected by lawyers, misinterpreted laws, and total lack of conscience and values. Often times, behaviors from such people are thrown back in the faces of those of us who abide by societal standards. Sometimes success comes at a price, and honest people frequently become the minority because of the conscience that the successful people have given up for their own fame and fortune.

Look at the leadership of this nation. We see infidelity, money laundering, extortion, and yet these are the people that consider themselves “successful.” Can they do this and still have a conscience and be true to themselves, or has their self-esteem been damaged by their rule-less and ruthless activities? I know I couldn’t. Yet, this is what we see in the news, and read in the papers. It even seems that those who create new laws and rules are the first to break them. Consider the current federal tax system. The people who get the most tax breaks are the ones who are breaking the rules to do it. And the infidelity rate among celebrities and politicians is literally “off the charts.” These are the ones who society views; the ones who many use as role models; and the ones that the younger generations are observing breaking the rules of society...so therefore, it must be okay.

I honestly believe that playing by the rules is influenced by family, religion, and personality traits. However, it is hard to accept that there are so many people who have had the same influences as I have and yet they choose a different path. When I have my own family, I will raise them with the same influences and pray that they too, will have a conscience, and will abide by the rules of society. I consider “playing by the rules” as very important in order to be true to my values, my faith, my family, and my own self-esteem. I cannot live my life with a weighted conscience because I have broken rules that I know I should not have. I do not want to live with guilt as this will have a negative effect on my life.





Ben McGlamery, Taylor Bonar, & Jim Pruitt

I believe in the innocence of a child. In 1960, I stopped at a bus station on my way through St. Louis. Inside the station was a little diner, and I went in to get a cup of coffee. I sat down and at the end of the bar, I saw a black man sitting by himself. I noticed that the black man at the end of the bar was trying to get the attention of the waitress, but she was ignoring him. She came and took my order and I pointed out that the man was trying to get her attention and she just rolled her eyes and continued to ignore him. Why, because he was black? What made the waitress think that I deserved service, and that gentleman didn't?

This day made me think back in my life. I remember when I was a child, some of my best friends were black children. We would play every day, and we never thought of each other as white or black. We were just kids, happy to have another kid to throw a ball around with. However, as I got older, I began noticing that in my community; most black people were treated inferiorly to whites. I remember when I was in the military and my buddies and I used to sleep with our bayonets under our pillows because there was so much racial tension and animosity between the whites and blacks.

A friend of mine told me a story that I feel applies to this belief. Back in his high school days my friend went on mission trips to Haiti over Christmas break. He traveled to Haiti three years in a row because he enjoyed it so much. He told me the things that he loved most about his trips were the children. In Haiti, white people are the minority, and on many occasions he was made aware of that fact by the Haitians. When he would go to the street market, people always shot him odd looks and would call him "blank," which means white in Creole. Even on

the way to and from the market, people would stand on the side of the street and yell “Blank! Blank!” at him.

However, one night he was exposed to the pure innocence of a child. While playing on the floor with the children in the orphanage, one of the little Haitian girls came up and kissed him. At first, he was quite shocked, and the nannies scolded her for the kiss, but actually, the kiss made him feel welcome in their society. When the majority of the adults were unappreciative of his efforts and shouted insults at him, that little girl just wanted to be his friend. The little girl did not see him as white, or different from herself like her society did - she saw him only as a human being.

How did I go from a little boy who couldn't see color to a man who slept with a bayonet to “protect” himself? Why is it so easy to be prejudice and racist, and so hard to remember how to treat another human being? I believe that our world would be in a better place if everyone could have the mindset of an innocent child, and judge a person's worth on their inner qualities, not on the color of their skin.





Marian Brown & Stephanie Brown

We believe to thine own self be true. In our day to day lives, we continually find ourselves needing to make decisions. These decisions include anything as minute as to what we will wear that day or what we will eat, to decisions with greater effects such as what we say to someone and how we choose to lead our lives. We have to make these decisions to be in accordance with our own beliefs and with what we hope to say about ourselves in doing so.

We must be careful not to allow the things of this world and other people to keep us from being who we believe ourselves to be. This does not mean that we do not take into consideration the needs of others because we are part of something larger than ourselves and this life is not for ourselves alone. Rather, these decisions need to reflect what we believe to be true and what is important to us. If our passion is helping people, then we should give freely of our time and efforts to others. If our passion is to lead a life that is for God's glory, then our actions should be a reflection of that. If our passion is music, then we should create and enjoy music often. No matter what one may believe, so long as his or her life brings to fulfillment these beliefs, then one is being true to thine own self.





Erika Strong, Katie Hayes, & June Medina

The best way to learn about life is to walk around in somebody else's shoes. Not everybody's glasses are rose colored. We come from all walks of life. Everybody is different in some way whether it be age, race, or gender. Taking time and learning from one another is important in understanding how experiences shape who we are.

Through a class assignment, the three of us – June, Katie, and Erika – had the opportunity to learn from one another. June is an 85 year old woman who has experienced WWII and the depression. She has seen technology advance in ways she never would have thought. Katie and Erika are college students just starting on their journey through the real world. We met once a week and talked about different aspects of the life course. We talked about surface things like the weather to how we all felt about death and dying. Each meeting we took something from each other. Sometimes these things were profound while other things were as small as a piece of advice. No matter how big or small the treasure of knowledge was, we took something from our experience.

Through life experiences, June showed us the power of prayer and we showed her that we are not stereotypical college students. Instead of getting drunk and enjoying time away from parents, we proved that we do have a thirst for knowledge and that learning is very important to us. June broke the stereotype of a conservative “old” lady, she taught us that everybody is worth something. She has a true love for people no matter where they come from or what their skin color is. We taught her that her perspective on life is not the only one.

