

VOCAL VARIETY SPEECH

To be delivered Wednesday, January 27, 2016

A Painful Conversation

Mr./Madame Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters, and esteemed guests:

I don't understand. I don't get it, I don't comprehend, this doesn't click, something doesn't add up, am I making myself clear? I don't understand.

On the flight out to Stanford I decided I had to be honest about my intentions. I *knew* they would ask me that question, and something just wouldn't let me fib on this one. What's the value of honesty anyhow? One little white lie never hurt anyone – did it?

Why do they even *care* so much about whether their students know *for sure* if they want to do a Ph.D. or not? I mean, what if someone were to change their mind about this and after one year decide that five or six more years of academic toil wasn't for them? Isn't it equally likely that someone who doesn't want a doctorate now at the outset might want one after starting with a master's degree? It just seems so *absolute* that they make us state from the get-go what we *will* do – when so much is yet to be decided. Who knows if I'll even *like* graduate school!

So my conscience got the best of me and when the professors asked me if I intended to stay for a Ph.D., I said that right now I couldn't commit to it – I just didn't know definitively. I might want to stick around, but perhaps after one year I'll know that it's not for me. Maybe I shouldn't be surprised that I wasn't selected for one of those precious five-quarter tuition grants then – I guess those go students who have their minds made up.

Ok God, I guess I'm just confused here. Whatever happened to doing what's right and having everything fall into place? I thought that I got to reap what I sowed. I was honest and now I don't have a scholarship for my dream school. I feel like you let me down.

I know that it's more complicated than that. I've heard plenty of stories of folks who did everything right and still got hurt. And in the scheme of things, I still got in to Stanford for graduate school – shouldn't I be grateful for that instead of upset over a little tuition break? I need to think about this logically. The department made the right decision. They only have so many dollars to give out, and that money has to go toward students who will use it best.

But logical thinking doesn't address my hurt feelings. There's this tuning fork inside my heart that says something was wrong here! What about me?

Oh, phooey on integrity! Is it really worth several thousand dollars to me? How come it's so difficult to gain but so easy to lose?

I'm going in circles. Get a grip Campbell. You say that You are with me and will never leave me. Time to have faith.

Still I wonder... will I ever have another chance to get a Ph.D. at Stanford?

Mr./Madame Toastmaster.