

Kyle Maynard speaks at Utah Valley University

Kyle Maynard, spoke at Utah Valley University on February 1, 2018. He has lots of passion and skills. Obviously, he is a sport fanatic, extreme climber, weight lifter, film lover, director and editor. Kyle discussed the “no excuses” message means you have the freedom to try. It does not guarantee success. Most of the time we fail, but that is how we grow. Most of the time we have excuses and cause self-doubt on our self. We each have our own “why” no matter age or gender. We might think that money is our why. For most people it is, whether it is to own a Lamborghini or have a big house. However, a why should be much deeper than that.

The map is not the territory. What this means is, your map is a perspective on your life and your view of others. Kyle discussed that if you saw him and did not know his story, you would feel bad for him. But once you got to know him, your map or perspective on amputee people would change. They can do anything we can do, when they set their mind to it. Our map should constantly be changing as we see more of the world and gain more experiences.

He used a spoon story/analogy about how he would continually drop the spoon. He did this thousands of times, and it was hard and very frustrating for him. But every time it fell, he tried to pick it back up again. He did not want to live his whole life having his mother or grandmother feed him and baby him his entire life. He wanted to give up, but he knew this was something he needed to do.

McKenzie, Kyle’s sister told her mom about a guy at her school who did not have an arm. She was shocked and told her mom about it. Her mom explained that Kyle did not have arms or legs, and this was the first time McKenzie realized her brother was different. Kyle was raised to believe he is the same as anybody else. This story illustrates that his parents instilled in each of their children that Kyle is the same as everyone else and can accomplish anything.

Kyles first team sport he joined was football. His mom told the coach her son had a disability but when he showed up the first day the coaches were shocked. He made the team and was able to continue to develop his love for sports. He also was on the wrestling team, and for the first year and a half of his sport career he lost every single game. 0-35. But he learned how to win and went on to get second place in the state. He has also set many world records in weight lifting.

“If you’re not dead,... you can’t quit.” This quote was so inspiring to me and has helped me to set goals and expect more of myself. Quitting is a choice, we can choose to push through the struggles or decide to stop. That decision is up to us and we directly impact the outcome of our

life. Kyle said anytime he doubted himself when climbing and was thinking of quitting, he would remind himself that he was not dead, so he could not stop.

The most interesting thing Kyle said in the speaker series was that: “The greatest gift he has ever had is not having arms and legs”. This caught me completely off-guard. I assumed he would wish he could have legs and arms and be like a “normal” person. But being a paraplegic is his normal. He has learned how to be his best self and not to be mad or bitter. Instead to take the fear and bitterness he had and put that towards trying new things. I left feeling very inspired and I felt as though there is no challenge I could not overcome. I noticed Kyle is happy because of his attitude and perspective on life. He could be bitter and live a life of misery. Instead he has turned that around and now inspires others with his story.

Ezra Pugliano, UVU student