

COLLEGE HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO THRIVING, NOT JUST SURVIVING, AT COLLEGE

Compiled by: Brandon Metcalf,
DCE

Christ the King Lutheran Church

August 2016

The Purpose of this Handbook

Why take the time to put together something like this for our college families here? First and foremost, it is because you guys are worth it. College students are one of the most overlooked groups in the church and I think a resource like this to help continue a college support ministry is a big step towards changing that trend. It's worth putting in some time and effort towards that goal. Secondly, I think that college students are in a unique position to be incredible missionaries of Christ on their various campuses and I want to help share that vision with our church family here. College is such an important juncture in life that the church needs to do whatever we can to help our young people not just survive at college, but thrive. Finally, I know there are all sorts of books and other resources written on this topic, but by consolidating it to a shorter handbook format and by writing it specifically for our context I hope that it'll be more useful to you than a generic guidebook.

Some of what follows is based on my own college experience, the experience of other students, research, and hopefully a bit of common sense. That kind of advice, feel free to take it or leave it, though I do hope that you can get something out of it. Take whatever works for you and apply that to your situation. But other parts of this resource are directly rooted in Scripture, and my prayer is that you really take God's Word seriously as you look at college. His plan for these years of your life is vastly different (and so much better) than what the world is trying to sell you. So much of what that entails is in finding your identity in the eternal promises of God versus in the temporary places that we naturally tend towards.

God's blessings as you get sent out as a missionary to your college campus, and remember that you are being regularly prayed for by your church family here at Christ the King. Don't hesitate to contact us if we can help you in any way and please know that you are always welcome back home!

In Christ,

Brandon Metcalf
Director of Christian Education
Christ the King Lutheran Church

Christ the King Lutheran Church
1700 Bagnell Dam Blvd
Lake Ozark, MO 65049
Office Number: 573-365-5212
www.ctlklo.com

Pastor Ron Lehenbauer: 573-480-0646
Pastor Kristopher Morris: 573-286-3862
Brandon Metcalf: 573-286-1214

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Spiritual Growth

I firmly believe that this is the most important area for a college student, but often the most neglected which is why I put it first in this handbook. In my experience and in that of the college students that I've talked with or worked with, if you get connected and grow spiritually in college, all the rest of the topics and issues that are covered here seem to take care of themselves. This idea is an echo of the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Finding a Church

"Church attendance is as vital to a disciple as a transfusion of rich, healthy blood to a sick man." – Dwight L. Moody

One of the toughest transitions for a Christian youth is leaving their home church. You go from being active in a church, or even if you're not active you have a place you can say is your church, to not knowing where to go. The problem is that far too many college students never find anywhere to go to church for those 4 or more years. Then they're so used to not going to church that they don't get reconnected when they're on break or have graduated. Contrast that picture with the students that get connected, find a place to regularly worship, and end up finding a church to be a part of wherever they end up moving to over the course of the rest of their lives. Here are a couple things to consider when looking for a local church at college:

-Start right away. Don't wait until things are settled, you're not busy, or whatever other excuse to find a church to attend. Even before you get on campus, you can use the LCMS website to look up Lutheran churches in the area (at lcms.org, use the "Find a Church" option under the Locators and Directories tab in the top right of the home page). Ask students that either went to that school before, are current students, or that you meet there which church they go to. Pick one to start with and start going the very first week you're on campus. You don't have to stick with that church forever just because you went one week, but at some point you need to settle in and stick with one church instead of church hopping each week.

-Any church will be different than Christ the King. The churches in your area may have a little different worship style, may have a different looking building, and will almost certainly have pastors that are less dynamic preachers than we have here in Pastor Ron and Pastor Morris. Side note, this is why I try to remind some of y'all regularly that you are spoiled (in a good way) by being here at CtK. We have been blessed with an amazing congregation and some amazing pastors, but don't let that turn you away from a church that does not do everything the way we do. Are they faithful to God's Word? Do you hear

God's grace and forgiveness for you each week? Is the worship focused more on Christ than on us? If you can answer yes to these questions, that is what is really important.

-Find a couple friends to go with you. This will not only help you feel more comfortable at the church, but also help motivate you and keep you accountable to being there. Talk about the service afterwards at breakfast or lunch (depending on which service you go to) and try not to only point out what you didn't like but also what you learned about God and what you can put into action this week.

-Get to know people at the church. This is something I wish I had done more, especially my first three years at college. It's so easy to just slide into a seat a few minutes after the worship service begins and sneak out right afterwards without ever really interacting with anyone outside of maybe a handshake or two. Talk to people before or after service (which some people are better at than others, I know) and actually get to know them. Oftentimes, many of the people at churches near colleges love getting to know the students there and will even go as far as to "adopt" students for a semester or year and will invite you over for dinner (free homemade food!!!), send you care packages, and look out for you in various ways. They can really become a family away from home, so take the leap and talk to a couple people after church each week.

-Don't be afraid to get involved. You don't have to just attend a church for worship, you can also get more involved than that. Help out with their youth group, attend an adult Bible class, join the men's or women's Bible study, teach a Sunday School class, or find a ministry to serve in. This not only helps you get connected and makes the church feel more like home, but your faith will really grow because of it as well.

-Make it a priority over sleep. This is what gets most college students (and far too many adults too) in trouble regarding church attendance. Go to early service and take a nap afterwards. Or sleep in and go to a later service. If you allow yourself to play the "I'm too tired to get up for church" card, you'll find yourself using that excuse every single Sunday, because chances are you'll always be tired. Again, having a group of friends that you go with to church can be a big help in this area, but it also takes some personal ownership and getting to the point of saying "I'm going to be a part of a church because it's important to me and because I need what God offers to me there."

Advice from College Graduates

"Find a church partner. Someone to go with you and keep each other accountable." –Samuel F.

"Find a church to attend before applying to that college. If there is no church for you to attend there, don't go to that college. Once you're there, contact the pastor and get to know him." –John K.

"Two book recommendations- "How to Stay Christian in College" by J Budziszewski and "Fish Out of Water: Surviving and Thriving as a Christian on a Secular Campus" by Abby Nye Suddarth." –Josh K.

Getting Involved in Campus Ministry

“Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God’s will.” –Eric Metaxes

Outside of a local congregation, a campus ministry is a fantastic place to get connected to while in college. While being in a small group or Bible study on campus during the week doesn’t replace Sunday morning worship, it really is one of the best ways to grow in your faith. In my experience, those students who get active in a Christian campus group (not just in name, but in actually growing in the Word and living it out) have the most explosive faith growth. Being surrounded by other young adults who are choosing on their own to be with other believers and grow together is one of the greatest opportunities for college students, and is an experience that is really unique to that period of your life. This is why I am so passionate about getting you all connected while at college, because it will absolutely change your life.

Here’s my one big piece of advice regarding a campus ministry: **find a ministry that’s not just something to go to, but to be a part of.** You’re looking for substance over entertainment, depth of relationships instead of how many, and accountability instead of anonymity. A good small group ministry, Bible study, men’s/women’s group, or student worship opportunity will give you those chances. Find something you can get involved in, not just go to. Whether you’re in a leadership role or not (though I would highly recommend finding a place to lead in campus ministry, as that was/still is one of the biggest influences on my life), find a group to belong to. Take ownership in it. Build strong friendships, find people to be honest with, and pray with one another.

Side note: Many campuses have a great Lutheran student center, and I would really encourage you getting involved there! But others do not have that opportunity. That’s not an excuse to not get connected. Find another Christian group and get plugged in. It will actually give you the opportunity to learn more about what you believe by talking with others that may have a little bit different doctrine than you on certain issues. Stretch yourself, learn, and grow.

Devotional Life

“The will of God is always a bigger thing than we bargain for, but we must believe that whatever it involves, it is good, acceptable and perfect.” –Jim Elliot, Christian martyr

Reading the Bible, praying, and being in fellowship with other believers are all habits that we know are important, but many Christians don’t actually do. Since your routines and schedule are already changing drastically from life at home, college is the

perfect opportunity to (re)start these activities and see how God can change your heart and life through His Word.

Create a habit. Just like anything else that you know is good for you, it is easiest to stick with it if you have a regular routine. There are numerous options for what this could look like for you. For me, when I was in college was the first time I really developed a robust routine for my faith, and as a result I grew more spiritually in those few years than I ever thought possible. I attended chapel each morning (since that was offered at Concordia), led a men's small group that met weekly, listened to a Christian podcast every weekday while I was in the weight room (also, the one time in my life I was in great shape physically), and attended a student-led worship service each Wednesday evening. Those are just a few ideas on habits that can be developed over the course of your time at college. Don't feel like you have to jump in and start everything all at once, but also don't wait too long to get those habits set.

Not the same for everyone. I just listed off what worked for me in college, but before I settled into that routine, I tried all sorts of other things. What worked for some of my friends and mentors just didn't work for me. I really find journaling to be an excellent and beneficial practice, but I couldn't do it on a regular basis. For other people, that's what they thrive on every day. Base your devotional life on how God has wired you individually and play to those strengths and passions. If you're passionate about music, make Christian music a part of your routine. Love to read? Grab a great devotional book. Do you find yourself too distracted when you're by yourself to ever actually pay any attention? Try a small group or Bible study. Some ideas of places to start with these different options are found in the next few pages.

Involve other people. Don't fall into the trap that "my personal devotional life is no one else's business." If your devotional time is centered in the Word and a certain verse really speaks to you, chances are it might have that same benefit to someone else. Don't be afraid to share with your friends what God is doing in your life through your devotional time. For some of you, this may look like being a part of a small group or Bible study where you get to learn from other believers. For others it may be meeting with a close friend for lunch or coffee each week and talking about what you've been reading in the Word. This will not only help keep you accountable to your time in the Word, but also help solidify what you are learning and strengthen your friendships all at the same time.

Important side note: Don't use this as a way to get dates. Asking a girl/guy that you're interested in if they want to "study the Bible together" in order to get to know them is weird and probably heretical. The Word is about the greatest Love in life, not a pick me up for your love life. Also, if someone asks you what you're learning in the Word, don't pull

the “I was reading through the book of Numbers and realized I don’t have yours” routine. Just don’t.

You need this. Having a devotional life is not just a nice suggestion, a bonus in case you have nothing better to do, or merely a good exercise for the “super Christians” to worry about. Being regularly in the Word and in prayer is absolutely essential to thriving in college. Satan has so many weapons that he can tempt and attack you with at college, including apathy, alcohol, seeking fame, drugs, laziness, pride, lust, jealousy, and the list could go on and on. If you’re not putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 6) through the Word, you’re open to shifting away not just from how God wants you to live so you can impact the world in His name, but ultimately from your faith itself.

Leading a Small Group

“The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists of listening to them. Just as love of God begins with listening to his word, so the beginning of love for our brothers and sisters is learning to listen to them.” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Many campus ministries and churches will have a small group ministry already up and running when you get there that you can get connected with right away. But some do not, and you may find yourself in a situation where you have to step up and start a small group yourself. I found myself in this scenario, where I had a good group of friends that wanted to strengthen each other by becoming a men’s small group. There wasn’t really a structure for it, so we just figured it out as we went along. The main thing is to be committed to meeting together regularly, praying together, and being open with another. The content of what you study or talk about is easy enough to figure out as you go along, and you can always check the devotional ideas below or contact the pastors or myself here for more ideas.

If you are worried that you can’t lead a Bible study, that doesn’t mean that you can’t start a small group. Use one of the videos from RightNow Media and have a discussion about it afterwards. Pick a chapter of the Bible and dig into it together. Don’t worry about always having to lead the discussion or provide all the insight. In fact, it is best if whoever is leading the group speaks only about 1/3 of the time or less, especially in a small group of peers. Give others the chance to talk about their lives and share their gifts. Use that 1/3 rule as a guide for you as you lead a group and I promise you, your discussions will go much better and you’ll feel more equipped as a leader when the rest of the group is contributing.

If you need some experience being a part of a group or leading a group, that is one of the reasons why we have our college students as leaders/members of the youth summer small groups. Take full advantage of that opportunity to learn and grow together. Remember, you’ll only get out of it what you put into it.

Devotional Resources

"It makes no sense to take the name of Christian and not cling to Christ. Jesus is not some magic charm to wear like a piece of jewelry we think will give us good luck. He is the Lord. His name is to be written on our hearts in such a powerful way that it creates within us a profound experience of His peace and a heart that is filled with His praise." –William Wilberforce

"I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time- waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God- it changes me." –CS Lewis

Here's a list of various types of devotional resources as a place to get started in case you have no idea where to go. When in doubt crack open your Bible and read directly from God's Word. Feel free to talk to peers, campus ministry leaders, parents, pastors, etc. about what works for them as well regarding their devotional time.

Websites/Apps

- www.lcms.org- The website for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod not only has the really handy "Find a Church" search feature to help you find a Lutheran church where you are, but has a ton of doctrinal information if you ever need to look up what our church believes on a certain issue or how to share that with others. Also on here is "LCMS U" which is the campus ministry of the Lutheran church and has a ton of great info for college students.
- www.desiringgod.org- This is Pastor John Piper's ministry website and all of his books and resources are available for free on here, including a ton of different devotional books and spiritual life resources as well as his sermons and blog.
- www.lhm.org- Lutheran Hour Ministries has a lot of great resources, such as daily devotionals, Bible studies, articles, and more.
- <http://www.dccebooks.com/free>- David C Cook is a big Christian publisher and you can sign up for a weekly e-mail that lets you know what the free ebook is that week. Some of these free books are actually really great devotional resources, plus you can't beat the price- free!
- www.ctlko.com- Hopefully this looks familiar, because this is our church's website! Check out the latest sermon from Pastor Ron or Pastor Morris or the newest podcast message from the previous week's youth group. A great way to still feel "back home" wherever you are.
- YouVersion Bible App- Better known as just "The Bible app," this is one of the best resources out there for Christians. They have all sorts of translations on there as well as excellent reading plans and daily devotionals which are so helpful in maintaining the habit of daily reading.

Podcasts- All of these are available for free download/listening on iTunes or the Podcast app on iOS, as well as through the church's individual website. Great to listen to in the car, at the gym, on a run, or during that one time you clean your room each semester.

- Our Saviour New York- This is the sermon podcast for Our Saviour Lutheran Church in New York, which is Rev. Matt Popovits' church. Many of you have heard him speak at the National Youth Gathering, and he is a very gifted preacher and teacher.
- Mill City Church- This church in Fort Collins, CO is led by Pastor Aaron Stern, who I have been learning from via sermon podcast for almost 8 years now. He is very engaging speaker and his Biblical teaching on discipleship, dating, and confession absolutely changed my college experience and life.
- The Village Church- This is Matt Chandler's church in Dallas, TX. Matt is one of the best preachers in the country, and has a very straightforward "preach through the text" way of giving a sermon that lets God's Word speak for itself and you'll be amazed at what God teaches you through him.
- Passion City Church- Louie Giglio is the lead pastor here, and just like all the guys on the list, has a real gift for preaching. He is an excellent communicator and the founder of the Passion Conference, which is an annual gathering specifically geared towards college students.

Books

- There's a plethora of devotional books out there, but here are a few that stand out to me: "It is Finished" by Tullian Tchividjian, "Treasury of Daily Prayer" from CPH, "Jesus Calling" by Sarah Young, "Operation World" by Jason Mandryk, and pretty much anything by Max Lucado.

Music

- Load up Spotify or Youtube and give some of these Christian artists a listen: Tenth Avenue North, Rend Collective, David Crowder, Chris Tomlin, Hillsong United, Shane & Shane, Matt Maher, Casting Crowns, Kari Jobe, Matt Redman, Mercy Me

RightNow Media

- RightNow Media is a resource that our church offers that has over 10,000 different Bible studies, Christian videos, conference sessions, etc. on it. It is perfect for personal study or for a small group and can be used through their website or on the RightNow Media app on your phone, tablet, Roku, Apple TV, etc. Please let me know if you don't have access to this amazing resource yet and I'll e-mail the information to get started.

- There are a ton of different categories of the Bible studies on there. There is a college section specifically targeting your age group, but also categories for men, women, youth, apologetics, evangelism, etc. Check out the “College Ready” program that we talked about over the summer as a place to start, or go to the Christ the King Lutheran Church section in the menu for other playlists of videos that we recommend.

Prayer

- ACTS prayer order- Adoration (thank God for who He is), Confession (repent for how you have tried to be your own god), Thanksgiving (for what God has done for you), Supplication (asking God to provide daily bread for you and others)
- Prayer Journal- Grab a journal and write a letter to God, just like you would a dear friend. I know some people that do this daily and it not only builds a very intimate relationship with God, but absolutely changes their attitude and outlook on life.
- Prayers in Scripture- Use some of the great prayers already in the Bible: Ephesians 3:14-21, John 17:1-26, Matthew 6:9-13, Psalm 51:10-13, Ephesians 6:19-20

Academic Success

Most people would say that this is the most important area of college. It is after all, designed as primarily an educational institution. But I would argue that primarily your focus as a Christian in college is the same as our focus as Christians in all areas of life: to share Christ's love with your neighbors, to grow in His grace, and to be in fellowship with other believers centered in the Word. College provides a unique environment for that spiritual growth to be explosive and for that outreach to be monumental. That being said, you also have the vocation of student at this same time, so the academic nature of college cannot be neglected. We serve God also by doing our vocations well, and that means being as good of a student as you can. I'm not going to go as far as saying that what follows are "words of wisdom" but at any rate, here are a few pieces of advice on how to succeed academically at college.

My 3 Rules to Pass Classes

Over the course of my college years, I narrowed down what worked for me in terms of thriving academically into a few rules that I lived by in each class. They proved to be very helpful in forcing me to do my very best in my vocation as a student, especially in those classes that I was not a fan of (you'll have some of those, trust me, but don't let them bring your GPA down). So with that introduction, I present "Metcalf's 3 Rules to Pass Class" (copyright pending...not really):

Go to class. This is probably the only controversial one on this list, as skipping class is a part of the current college culture. I just have a few cautions regarding missing class. First, it is addicting. If you skip class for one reason or another (sleeping in, eating lunch, hanging out with friends, you think the class is pointless, etc.), you all of a sudden have this new time slot in the day that you really enjoy having free. It becomes easier and easier to then take that time to do other things instead of being in that class, and what happens to all too many students is that suddenly they're way behind in that class and have no way to catch up. Then when they go to the professor, there's very little sympathy for a student that is rarely in class. The number one commonality for students that struggle with their grades in college is that they don't go to class.

Plus, some professors (not all, but many) will go over topics in class that are not covered in the books or notes at all, but will oftentimes show up on the test. Honestly, most students spend more time trying to get caught up via notes, books, or tutors from what they missed by not being in class than they would have actually spent just sitting in class and taking a few notes. I know this is very hard to do, especially with classes or professors that you don't care for, however it is pretty clear to see that if you go to class, academics become much easier. Don't be one of the countless examples of students thinking they're the

exception to this rule and then failing classes or losing scholarships because they found out too late that they can't just skate by like they did in high school or as underclassmen in college.

It's a display of character to do things that you don't want to do (like going to class) but it is also a display of character to try and do the bare minimum possible in various areas of your life. Be careful of how your choices are impacting/revealing your character and don't fool yourself into thinking that this attitude doesn't bleed over into other areas of your life (relationships, career, church, etc.) for good or bad. Being dedicated to doing your best even when you can't see the benefit, don't want to, and would rather spend time doing something just for yourself is the greatest preparation for not only your career but also for marriage and parenting in the future.

Turn everything in on time. This should be a no-brainer, but is actually harder than it looks oftentimes. For one, it involves actually knowing what you're supposed to do and when you're supposed to do it by. Yes, that means reading the syllabus for the class. Some professors will hand out the syllabus on day one and never mention the assignments on it again, just expecting you to know what to do and when to turn it in by. Most will give you a few reminders, but not nearly as much as you get more into your major classes.

Once you know when you're supposed to do an assignment or project by, this rule becomes pretty easy: do it by then. Some professors won't accept any late work at all and those zeroes on assignments can absolutely wreck your grades. At the very least, there is almost always a penalty for late work if it accepted at all. Avoid all of that by simply turning things in when they're due. It's very basic, but so important.

Don't turn in junk. Here's where the discipline and hard work really come into play. Don't just throw something together and turn it in. Be proud of the work that you've done. If you put your name on a paper or project, that should be your equivalent of a company's "quality assurance seal." For those of you that are not picturing an actual seal (the animal) stamping boxes, basically the point I'm trying to make is that if you put your name on a product or piece of work, that should mean something. I'm not saying that you should just turn in assignments without your name on them if you're not sure about the quality, because that will end up in you getting no credit for anything, which is what we're trying to avoid. On numerous occasions, this involved staying up all night (partially due to underestimating how much time it would take) to work on a project and make it something I wanted to put my name on, but it was worth that investment of time to have a good finished product. Again, I feel like this is all pretty basic, but do your best. If your best is a C, then you should be able to rest easy knowing that you did your best. But if your best is an A and you're getting a C because you're turning in junk, that's not nearly as rewarding.

Not only does will this help your grades, but it has a huge impact on your future career. If your work hard and produce quality results, your employer will notice. If your professors were impressed with your work ethic, they will write great reference letters for you and oftentimes even use their connections to help you get a good job. When your name becomes synonymous with “hard worker, good character, quality individual, etc.” you are living out your God-given vocations and it gives you a platform from which to share Christ with those individuals wondering why you work the way you do.

The Exceptions to the 3 Rules

Following these 3 simple rules will give you a solid foundation academically, relationally, and personally. Here’s one of the best things about having this strong foundation: it gives you some breathing room in those rare emergencies that the 3 rules get broken. Let me give you a few examples from my own college experience:

-My freshman year of college, I busted my ankle up real good playing intramural volleyball (I played men’s volleyball in high school and never got a scratch, but that’s a whole separate issue) on a Sunday evening and couldn’t put any weight on it whatsoever. The campus nurse’s office (where I could get crutches) wasn’t open until 9am on Monday morning, so there was no way I could physically get to my 8am Statistics class. Now I was not a big fan of Statistics (I thought I was already retired from math after high school), but since I had gone to class without fail before even though I really didn’t want to, my professor had no problem with me missing that Monday and even helped me get caught up afterwards.

-My junior year, I had a weekend church trip that I was supposed to get back from at about 4am on a Monday morning. So I gave my professor a heads up that just in case travels didn’t go well, I may not be at class. This professor, whom I had already had for a few classes, had a very strict policy where Monday morning from 9:00-9:10 was the reading quiz. If you showed up at 9:05, you only had 5 minutes left for the quiz. If you showed up at 9:11 or later, you got a zero on the quiz. I’d seen her enforce this policy many times before. I fully expected that if I wasn’t able to make class, I wouldn’t get to take the quiz. But she told me not to worry about class at all, even if we got back on time because she wanted me to get some rest. She told me that since she thought I was a good, hard-working student that was trustworthy, I could take the quiz on Wednesday. I had worked hard to build that reputation over a few semesters of following my 3 rules, which enabled me that exception.

-In second semester senior year, I was coasting along to graduation and was just wrapping up the last few assignments. I had on my calendar that a certain project was due on Thursday, when actually it was due on that Tuesday. I didn’t find that out until Tuesday in class (again, in upper-level classes there are very few reminders). I talked to the

professor after class and because I had been consistent in the past, he allowed me to turn it in the next class period with only a slight penalty.

I would also say that these ideas are probably even more important at a larger school than a small school, since professors are less likely to know you naturally due to larger class sizes and oftentimes there are more students that are not motivated to be there, so you will stand out even more if you show you care.

I was able to narrow my academic strategy to those 3 rules, but you may find that something a little different works for you. None of this is rocket science, nor is it really that hard to know in theory, but becomes difficult in actually carrying it out. That being said, I think it's definitely worth that investment and I do truly believe that a good work ethic, consistency, and participation will go a long way towards thriving academically in college and set up a great foundation for the future.

Dealing with Professors

College professors are different than most teachers you may have had before, and while each professor is unique, here are a few guidelines to make the most of your interactions with your professors:

-Talk with them outside of class. This is huge. Don't be weird and bother/stalk your professors, but talking to them a bit before or after class can make a big difference. Ask them a question about the lesson or class in person when you get the chance versus over e-mail. If you develop a relationship with your professors, they are more likely to help you out, write better reference letters, give you opportunities for further advancement (like a campus job, research study, summer internship, or even a full-time career), and serve as valuable mentors for you. Almost every professor really enjoys getting to know their students and genuinely wants to help you succeed. Take advantage of the great resources you have in your professors, and that all starts with a few simple conversations.

-Observe e-mail etiquette. Each professor will have their own guidelines as to how they should be communicated with, but e-mail is one very common way for this to take place. I learned a few simple things about e-mailing a professor that helped me out over the years. First, always use their title when you address an e-mail to them (Dr., Professor, President, etc.) and not their first name unless you have been given prior permission. Secondly, use your school e-mail address to send something to a professor, not your personal e-mail address. I didn't like my school's antiquated e-mail system, so I just forwarded everything over to my personal e-mail and worked from there. But I learned from a few professors not to do that, so I still used my school e-mail in those instances. Make sure you read over your e-mail for spelling/grammar and to make sure it makes sense. That quick read through can save you a lot of embarrassment in this area, and helps

show that you are a responsible adult. You are not texting your BFF, so don't let your e-mails sound like that. Treat it more like a formal letter and you'll do fine, including having your name/signature at the bottom of each e-mail. I used "In Christ, Brandon Metcalf" as the automatic e-mail signature and that worked just fine. Nothing's worse than getting an e-mail back from a professor asking who this is because you didn't sign your name and your e-mail address doesn't make it clear enough. Finally, before you send the e-mail off, double check if it would make more sense to be an office visit or phone call rather than an e-mail. Don't make your professor try and type out answers to six questions, when you could just meet them in their office and save everyone time.

-Take advantage of office hours. Every professor is required to have a certain number of designated office hours based on how many classes they teach. They are supposed to be available in their office during those times for students to meet with them. Most professors have them posted on their office door or in their class syllabus. Set up a meeting time with them ahead of time if you need help, and then actually show up at that designated time or even a few minutes early. This goes a long way in not only receiving help from your professor, but in building that relationship with them.

Advice from College Graduates

"Don't be afraid to talk to your professors after class." –Joel H.

"Don't be afraid to ask a professor for help. It really is helpful and it shows that you actually care. They can see you are taking extra time to learn the material." –Kelsev O.

Studying

There are entire books and manuals written about how to study, so I won't cover the specifics of those here. But I will say that how you study may change not only from high school, but even from class to class in college. The biggest thing is to find a place where you can actually study. For some people it's their dorm room, but many others have too many distractions there (roommates, friends, Netflix, etc.). Some people find a nice space in the library, but for others the silence drives them crazy. Study groups can be helpful for certain students, but very unproductive for others. Find a place and time where you can actually get your work done, but don't lock yourself away for the whole semester. Building relationships is important too, and you'll work that balance out as you go along.

One other piece of advice is to use time between classes to your advantage. If you have class at 8am and then a break until noon, use that time to your benefit. Most of your friends will likely have class anyways, so use that time to get some work done in the library or your room. That's one less thing that you'll have to do in the evening, and you can use more time then to be with friends. Alternatively, those breaks between classes are also

great for meetings, devotional time, working out, grabbing a snack/meal, or taking a nap. Take time to not only take care of your classes, but also yourself.

Time management is huge in college and if you actually force yourself to be somewhat organized, it will benefit you immensely in the long-run. You may actually have to get a planner or calendar and write down (or type in electronically) your schedule and to-do list in order to not miss anything. It's what most adults have to do for their works, so you might as well get a head start on it now. Find something that works for you so that not only do you not forget assignments or miss meetings, but that you can maybe even plan ahead a bit to give you some breathing room during extra busy weeks or weekends.

Advice from College Graduates

"I swear by the Read It, Write It, Say It study method. If you need to remember something for longer than the 5 minutes you try to cram it in before a test, this is the way to go. Read all the study materials, copy them down by hand or on a computer, then read through them all out loud. Doing so stores the information in three separate areas of the brain, making it more easily accessible. Repeat until it sticks, and you'll have a much easier time in tests." –Takota T.

"Find places to learn and apply things outside the classroom, like a campus or local coffee shop." – Amanda B.

"Know when you are most productive and plan for that to be your study time. If you are most productive after dinner then try to get time with your friends in before and during dinner, but do keep in mind that your friends may have a different time when they are most productive. Also, give yourself a break! Don't make your break longer than your study time, but don't be afraid to tell yourself to walk away from a paper or project for 30 or so minutes, so that you can realign your focus and come back to it with a straighter mindset." –Bethie W.

Handling College Classes

"You know, a lot of people go to college for seven years...I know, they're called doctors" – Tommy and Richard from "Tommy Boy"

-Actually read and keep the syllabus. With each class that you take, you will receive a syllabus on the first day that outlines the assignments, due dates, and expectations. It may seem overwhelming at first to look at all the work you'll have to do, and you'll probably have multiple moments in those first few weeks where you think you'll never be able to get all of that done (I know I had a couple of those classes over my four years) but it all falls into place in the end. The biggest thing you can control is to actually pay attention to the due dates, as most professors will not remind you about assignments or projects and assume you are taking care of them on your own. This may involve a little bit of organization and planning (which I know some people are not good at naturally, but

you have to find a system to make that work if you want to be successful) but if you check it regularly and stay on top of it, you should be just fine.

-Get help if you need it. At any college, there are numerous options to receive help in any given class. The vast majority of professors are willing to work with you if you talk with them, especially if you ask for help early on instead of right before the final. Most subject areas have official tutors that you can go to, or you can at least find someone that is doing well in the class that can help you. If you struggle with writing papers, almost every college has some kind of a writing center, where you can get those skills improved. If you are struggling in a class but regularly seeking help and tutoring for it, a professor is much more likely to be understanding and helpful to you. Take advantage of all these people who want to help you succeed.

-Take advantage of being able to make your own schedule. This is one of the biggest advantages to college, especially as you advance in your program. While you may not have complete control over your schedule, depending on what your major is and what school you're at, you should be able to control some combination of the following:

- **How many classes you take.** You have to take 12 credit hours per semester to be considered full time and normally over 18 credits is considered overload. Don't just figure out what you have to take in order to graduate on time. You can maybe take a few more classes in your first few years so you can maybe have a little more room open in your schedule your senior year (this is the route I took and it really helped when I was approaching graduation and struggling to finish those last few major projects). Or you can take fewer classes your first semester to help you transition into college and then take more like 15-16 credits after that. If your program has one huge class of doom (like organic chemistry for science people), you may try to take more like 12-13 credits that way to give you more time to focus on that very tough class.
- **What time the classes are at.** If a class is only offered at one time, then you're stuck. But oftentimes, you may be able to choose from a couple different options. Do you work better in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Would you rather have classes all in a row or have a break between each? Do you want to have classes concentrated on a few days and have the other days be lighter, or would you rather spread it out more evenly? Take those questions into consideration and try to plan your schedule accordingly if you can.
- **Which professors you have.** As with the time of classes, some may only be offered with one professor and you'll have no choice in the matter. But with many others you may be able to pick who is teaching the class. Ask students who have taken the class before who they liked as the teacher (but try to keep an open mind if you get the "bad professor") or pick a professor you had before in class. Taking

more than one class with the same professor can be beneficial because you know their teaching style, grading style, and already have a working relationship with them.

- **What semester (or year) you take which classes.** Oftentimes upper-level classes will have prerequisites that you must take first, are only offered either Fall or Spring semester, or only offered every other year and as a result, you may not really get to pick when you take them. But more often than not, you can choose whether you want to take a class in the Fall or Spring, junior year or senior year, etc. Use this to your advantage and maybe switch a hard class to a semester that is a little lighter. Or if you work an on-campus job in the Spring, then try to load your Fall schedule more.
- **Taking class for credit or not.** This may sound weird, but there are options where you can take a class and not get credit for it. Why would you ever want to do that? Well, there are some really cool elective classes or courses that you think are helpful and interesting to learn, but are not a part of your program of study. Instead of spending all sorts of time and energy working on a class that you don't need to take (and risk hurting your GPA as a result), you can audit a class if the professor agrees. This means that you can show up to class, learn, take notes, etc. but you don't have to necessarily turn in any of the assignments or take any tests since you're not getting a grade. That way you can learn about a class you want to, but don't have to worry about a grade. Many students use these for additional information they may want to learn for their job (such as marketing, public speaking, technology, foreign language, etc.) or just something they're interested in (different culture, sports classes, learning a certain skill, etc.). Or there are certain elective classes that you can take as a pass/fail class and not have to worry about all the assignments or the class impacting your GPA at all, but still get credit for the class. Talk to your advisor about these options for interesting classes that are not requirements in your program of study.

Advice from College Graduates

"Don't stress over the small things! That huge report or test seems like a big burden now, but looking back it's not that bad." –Kelsey O.

"Learn time management. Prioritize school work so you get it done first, then use your spare time for pleasure. Then go to bed at a decent time- it will save you time and you will accomplish more in the long run. This took me a couple of years to learn!" –John K.

"Travel as much as you can- now is the time! Study abroad, learning tours, etc. Tack it on to your student debt or something because those are the best experiences you will have!" –Amanda H.

Textbooks

"That's how they get you..." –All dads

Textbooks can oftentimes be very expensive and sometimes are not very helpful and as a result, don't seem worth it. But in most cases, they are a required part of the class and you absolutely cannot pass without them. Here are a couple thoughts to help lessen that blow:

-Don't buy them all from the bookstore! Many universities will say that you can just send them your class list and they will get all your books for you. Remember every college dad's favorite phrase: "That's how they get you." That system sounds so nice and convenient, but please, don't fall into that trap. You will spend way more if you do it that way. See if you can buy them used off of Amazon or a student that has already taken that class.

-Check with the professor on which edition to buy. Oftentimes, a previous edition can be used and will be significantly cheaper. Publishers will "update" their textbooks every few years and in most cases, the revisions are extremely slight and have little impact on what you need for that class. I had one class where I decided to take a risk and buy the previous edition instead of the brand new updated 7th edition of the book. Once I got it, I compared with a friend who had the new one and in the entire 400 page textbook, there were only 2 research studies that were different. Literally the entire rest of the book was the same, and I got the previous edition for $\frac{1}{4}$ of the price of the new edition. Score update: Brandon- 1, system- 23.

-Consider sharing with a friend. This is not plausible in all cases, but if you can split the cost of a book with a friend, roommate, or someone on your hall, it can oftentimes be well worth it. Make sure it is someone that you can either work with or at least is good at sharing (unfortunately, sharing is not part of most admissions interviews).

-Be wary of library copies. I'm not saying that there's necessarily anything weird or spooky with the library copies. But if there is something strange in your neighborhood or library, report it to campus security, or just cut out the middle man and call the Ghostbusters. Your school library will have at least one copy of almost every textbook you will need, which is great...unless someone else has that copy or all the copies (book hoarders...it's totally a thing). This always seems to happen whenever you actually need the book the night before a project is due. Not that this happened to me ever (score update, Brandon- 1, system- 24). Moral of the story, if you plan on using a library copy for a class, try and have a back-up plan. There are no semester long check-outs for books, and you also can't register for next semester's classes if you have a library fine or overdue book. Again, that's how they get you.

Choosing a major

"You have worth apart from your work and that frees you to work for all that it is worth." - Matt Popovits

One of the biggest decisions you will make as a college student is which major you pick for your primary program of study. This choice determines which classes to take, what career path you're headed on, and even how long it takes until you graduate. The later you choose or change your major, the longer you may have to take classes. In many career fields, the fact that you have a degree matters more than what the degree is specifically in, so you may want to just finish out the degree you have rather than start a new one in your junior or senior year. For many employers, after you already have your first job or two and have a few years of experience under your belt, that matters way more on a resume than what your degree was in. You can also always change career education by getting a master's degree in an alternate area of study than your undergrad. The average college student changes their major 2-4 times in college and then after graduation, changes the field they are in anywhere between 3-12 times in their first 15 years out on the job. Moral of the story, having a degree and being a hard worker matters more than what the degree is in oftentimes.

Regarding how to find a major that fits you, look at not just what you are good at, but what you like doing. What gifts has God given you and how can you use those to not only make a living, but to serve others in your vocation? For all of us, there are a variety of different areas that we could succeed in. Pick one and serve God through that rather than stressing out over whether or not you picked the right one. You can always change as you go along, as God opens other doors for you to serve in new ways. If you have no idea where your gifts lie, listen to the people around you. What are they saying you're good at? Do your professors identify areas that you're gifted in? Use that feedback to help you in making a decision. I had a number of people ask me my first year at Concordia if I was going into church work, and after telling all of them "just because I can speak in public and grow a beard, doesn't mean I have to work at a church," I finally got to thinking about what they were saying. Once I put my areas of interest and combined them with the gifts and experiences God had given me, I saw that DCE ministry would be a good fit for me. So many other students have a similar story, so be sure to listen to those around you as well as look for your areas of interest, skill, and passion.

Advice from College Graduates

"It's never too early for internships or to attend career fairs. Seek out advice from professionals in your field- it builds your network while gaining extremely valuable insight." -Amanda B.

Building New Relationships

One of the great opportunities of the college years is the chance to meet all kinds of new people and oftentimes develop lifelong friendships. Some people make new friends easily, while it is a real challenge and source of anxiety for others. Regardless of where you fall on that spectrum, college is a unique opportunity to “reinvent” yourself. Whatever you were known for in high school doesn’t have to define you anymore. Almost everyone at college has no idea who you are or what your background is, so you almost have a blank slate from which to write who you are.

For some students that is a great opportunity to get away from a mistake, a bad reputation, or being stereotyped in one way or another. For others that were popular, successful, or had a great reputation this fresh start can be nerve-wracking. No matter what you were known for previously, I think every college student needs to take advantage of their fresh start. This great opportunity is one of the main reasons why I believe so strongly that college students need to be a priority for the church. If you’re already going to be redefining your identity, why not redefine it around what God says about you?

This search for identity is a primary culprit in many of the pitfalls of college students. A student is worried that no one notices him and doesn’t want to be overlooked, so what does he do? He tries to find his social identity and value at a big party, fitting in with the binge-drinking crowd. Another student at that same party may be there because that’s where her sorority is and so she has to be there too because she’s searching for identity in that sorority. One student may find herself trapped by her books and projects, leaving no room for self-care or friendships, because her identity is wrapped up in her academic success. An athlete who was the star on his team in high school and suddenly finds he is no longer the strongest, fastest, or most talented on the team or gets injured and has to stop playing oftentimes doesn’t know who he is anymore. A returning student who has had a bad semester or two, made some mistakes, or has developed a reputation that she doesn’t want and is letting those decisions define her is finding identity in her past.

The examples could go on and on, but I hope the main idea rings through: all of these searches for identity and meaning not only come up empty, but cause more problems than they solve. Redefining your identity around the only thing that lasts, that you are a forgiven child of God with infinite value and a mission to carry out in this world is the best thing you can do during your college years. Not only does this help you avoid or move past the poor decisions that define most students’ college experience, but it sets you up to minister and reach out to those very same peers who are searching for what you’ve already found. Not to say you have it all together, but you’re building your life around the one foundation that lasts.

Advice from College Graduates

“Chances are low that many people at your college know you. Take advantage of that in a good way. If you had a rough time in high school or the past, no one knows. Here’s your chance to recreate yourself or start over as the person you want to become.” –Kelsie Z.

“The biggest skill I wish I would have been better at before college is being able to sit and talk with someone you don’t know (and possibly don’t agree with/have much in common with).” –Joel H.

“The cafeteria is a great place to meet new people. If you only know one person at the table, then ask to join, and you can make some amazing new friends during the span of one meal.” –Bethie W.

Roommate(s)

For most students, dealing with a roommate is your most unique relationship during your college years. You’ve had friends, teachers, and teammates earlier in your life, but many people have never had a roommate before and even if they have, it’s been a sibling. Since this is new territory for so many of you, here are a few thoughts on managing the roommate relationship. Note, your college will also have some very helpful information on this topic so don’t be afraid to use those resources if you’re having difficulties.

-You don’t have to be best friends. But you do have to live together, so find out ways to make that work. Some of the best sets of roommates that I’ve known didn’t hang out together often, had different study habits and personalities, and even had very different interests. But they did a great job of making all that work out so that living in the same room was enjoyable. Some roommates end up as best friends and in each other’s weddings and all that, but many do not and that doesn’t mean that they can’t be great roommates.

-Talk with your roommate first or second about a conflict. Some resources will tell you to always talk to the person the conflict is with first, which works great for many minor or small issues. But I also think that oftentimes it is very beneficial to talk with an outside person first, as long as you choose that first person wisely. Don’t just pick someone that will take your side on everything and then will gossip to the whole campus about whatever you told them in private. Pick someone who will intently listen to you, ask questions to try and get the full story, calm you down, pray with you, challenge you to find where you are at fault too instead of putting all the blame on your roommate, and do all of this in total confidence. Having a good friend like this to talk with first will help calm you down before you talk with your roommate, help you organize your thoughts first so you can be more coherent and understandable later on, help you gain some perspective on the conflict, and help follow-up with you to make sure you actually talk to your roommate if that’s what the next step needs to be.

-Deal with issues while they’re small. Normally this involves talking about issues soon after they become a problem for you rather than waiting until they’ve become a much

bigger deal than they should've been. A lot of this can be covered when you first become roommates if your college has you write and sign a Roommate Contract or something similar. The best thing you can do to avoid a lot of these small issues is to talk about your individual preferences together right away instead of finding out about all of them via various small conflicts, which can quickly turn into big conflicts.

-Pray for your roommate. I cannot stress enough how important this is. It is a lot harder to be unfairly upset at someone when you're praying for them. Not only does prayer help your attitude regarding your roommate in conflict, God can often use prayer to give you compassion for that person, which leads to you looking for ways you can help your roommate and share God's love with them through acts of service. If you don't believe me that this works, just try it and see what happens. You can also look up "Fruitcake and Ice Cream" by Louie Giglio online and watch that presentation. That video tells the powerful story of how God used a Christian that prayed for, listened to, and was kind to her hostile atheist roommate to absolutely change her roommate's life. You can make that difference too, and it all starts with prayer!

-There are a lot of great things about having a roommate too! It's so easy to focus on the negatives of having to share space and stuff with a person that could be totally different from you. But a roommate is also built in company if you need it, someone to talk to and who is likely going through similar things as you, can help you learn new things and gain perspective based on their upbringing and background, and can help wake you up if you sleep past your alarm. I remember in my freshman year when I had gone to bed early (for once) in preparation for a huge presentation I had in my morning class the next day. I woke up in a panic with that "I'm late" feeling, and looked at the clock to find out it was 1:00! I was so upset because I had missed my class, when I noticed that my brother (who was my roommate at the time) was just sitting there at his desk working on something. I got upset with him and angrily asked him why he didn't wake me up! He replied that it was 1:00 in the morning and that I need to just go back to bed, I hadn't missed anything. See, roommates aren't all that bad.

-Random roommate assignment: It can seem very arbitrary and unfair if your "randomly selected" roommate is not someone you would've ever picked to room with if given the choice. Keep in mind that you were also randomly selected for them as well. Focus on what you can control, which is your attitude and actions, and work so that your roommate is glad that they were given a roommate like you. If you act that way, in almost every case they will reciprocate and things will work out just fine overall.

-Multiple roommates: If you have more than one roommate, all of the above apply even more, as you have more people to manage that relationship with. Don't pit some roommates against others, but try to all work together to have a good living arrangement.

-Picking a roommate after your first year: Here's one of the saving graces of the roommate process. Even if the first year was random and didn't work out well, in almost every case you can pick your own roommate in subsequent years. Just because you choose a different roommate your second year doesn't mean that you aren't/can't be good friends with your first roommate. You also don't have to just pick whoever your best friend is at the time, because some people can be great friends as long as they don't live together. Pick someone that will be not only someone you enjoy spending time with, but also someone that you can live with peacefully.

Friends

"Every relationship for a Christian is an opportunity to love another person like God has loved us."—Joshua Harris

It should be no surprise that you will meet a ton of new people at college, regardless of whether you go to a big school or a small school. You will find yourself getting to know these people faster and better than you knew most of your friends in high school or before, oftentimes. A lot of this is due to the amount of time that you will spend together, so be mindful of who you are spending all this time with. At the risk of oversimplification, I'm going to narrow this whole topic down to the two main friend groups that you should have:

1. **Close Christian friends.** This could be an official small group or just friends from your hall, classes, campus ministry, church, community, etc. But you need a group of close friends that share your beliefs, that are praying for you, that you can study the Word together with, that are helping keep you accountable to living the best that God has for you, and that you can be in community with. Hopefully you can have a lot of fun together as well. Don't just spend time with these people at Bible study, but also at sporting events, studying, intramurals, campus activities, coffee shops, in the dorms, and in your classes. This group keeps you grounded and rooted in Christ and will help you grow personally and spiritually by leaps and bounds over the course of a few years.
2. **People that are different from you.** Get to know people that look, think, talk, and act different than you do. Talk with them, spend time with them, become friends with them, and get to know them. Gaining new perspectives, being challenged, and learning new ideas is part of what college is all about. Step out of your homogenous comfort zone and cross cultural, religious, ethnic, ideological, political, and social lines not just in the classroom but outside of it. Don't just talk about reaching the lost in the world, actually get to know them.

Here's where many Christian youth tend to get into trouble. Either they only spend time with people that have a totally different outlook on life than them and end up

walking away from the truth, or they are the opposite and hardly interact with those that are different than them and miss out on the opportunity to share God's Word with others. Striking a balance is hard, but that's what Jesus did in His ministry here on earth. In reply to the question, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus says "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:16-17). He clearly had a heart for the lost and backed that up by spending significant time with them, but also note that didn't mean Jesus was doing the same things they were doing. Jesus was eating with tax collectors and prostitutes, but was not robbing people of their money or committing adultery along with them. There is a difference between reaching out to others and becoming just like them. You can spend time with people that are making choices you don't think are wise without making those same choices yourself.

This is where the close Christian friend group is so important. These two groups of people don't have to be mutually exclusive, nor should they be. You don't have to be the only Christian in a group. Bring someone else with you if that will help. Center your life around the Word with your Christian brothers and sisters, which will give you a firm foundation from which to reach out to others. Have that group pray for you and help you in serving and sharing God's love with those that do not believe like you do.

Again, finding balance is hard, but it is so important. Don't just have Christian friends, but also don't find yourself abandoning the Church because you're only spending time around people who are rejecting your faith. Here are a few reflection questions to ask yourself about the balance of your friend groups:

- What does my church involvement look like? Do I have friends that encourage me to regularly worship? Do I have people to be involved at church with?
- Am I currently "in the world," "of the world," both, or neither?
- Who am I praying for? Who is praying for me?
- Am I influencing my friends or are they influencing me? Is this influence positive or negative, God-pleasing or self-worshipping?
- Who am I reaching out to with God's love?

Advice from College Graduates

“Don’t be afraid to talk to upperclassmen. I made some great friends just a month or two before they graduated that I missed out on much more time with just because they were older than me.” –Tory P.

“Surround yourself with valuable friends with similar goals in the classroom, in athletics, spiritually, in recreation, and socially. When you have friends that you can spend hours with on homework in the library and then turn around and spend hours socially with the very same people, it shows how valuable you find them.” –Daniel G.

Dating

“A woman’s heart should be so hidden in Christ that a man should have to seek Him first to find her” – Max Lucado (the same should be said of godly men too)

*“So what do you think the chances are of a girl like me and a guy like you ending up together?” “Not good.” “Not good, like one in a hundred?” “More like one in a million.” “Oh...*long pause*...so you’re telling me there’s a chance! Yeah!” – Lloyd and Mary in “Dumb and Dumber”*

This is one area of the Christian life that I am especially passionate about. I think that dating has great potential to grow someone in their faith and witness, but I have also seen far too many times where an individual dating the wrong kind of person ends up being drawn away from their faith completely and actually totally changes who they are (this harkens back to the identity issue addressed earlier). From what I see in our current Christian culture, far too many young people have way too low of standards when it comes to dating/marriage relationships and have a faulty understanding of what the purpose of those relationships are in the first place. This is a topic that we spend two months talking about in youth group each year, so this certainly won’t be an exhaustive list here but hopefully serves as the beginning of a conversation for you regarding God’s ideas on dating and relationships.

-In the beginning: It’s so easy to base “ready to date” status on age rather than maturity and character. Just because you or another person are off on your own now, so to speak, does not necessarily mean that you are ready for a relationship. The foundation for your life (dating life included) should be the same as the foundation of Scripture: “In the beginning, God....” (Genesis 1:1). Those four words are meant to define your whole life. In the beginning of college, God. In the beginning of your career, God. In the beginning of your single life, God. In the beginning of your relationship, God. In the beginning of your marriage, God. The list can go on, but the point is that God is meant to be the foundation, the beginning of everything that you do. Before looking for a relationship, check on that

foundation. “In the beginning, God” is meant to be enough for us, more than enough in fact. Ask yourself, “Is God enough? Am I okay with it being just me and God for a while?” If you are content in your relationship with God, receiving your identity, meaning, and value from Him, then you’re not going to be searching for someone else to be your god, just a partner in ministry here on earth. You’re no longer looking for “the One” because you have already found Him, or rather He has already found you. God is your “the One” and now you are looking for “the Two,” someone who will walk with you in faith on this journey of life. Feel free to use this phrase on your next date, “I just want to be honest about how this date is going. You’re not the one....(take a dramatic pause to see what their reaction is)...but you might be the two.” This should be good news for that other person, because essentially you’re telling them “I’m not going to suck the ever-living life out of you in search of value and meaning” because you’ve already found that in Christ.

Another note on this subject is that as a result of your foundation on Christ, you need to be looking for someone that has this same foundation, so that you are on the same page and can both build on something that lasts. Being on the same page spiritually is a huge issue that so many Christian couples overlook. A guideline for this is that there needs to be something serious going on spiritually between them and Jesus without you in the picture. If they have a growing individual relationship with God, you will also have the same standards for other aspects of your relationship, founded on God’s Word. If someone doesn’t have that foundation at all, don’t date them in order to evangelize them. The dating relationship (which is meant to be intentional, leading to marriage or breaking up once it is determined marriage is not the end result) is not meant for reaching out to unbelievers, that’s what friendship is for. Run after Jesus with everything that you have and as you’re running this race of faith, take a look around at who’s running the same direction as you. They just might be the Two.

-Don’t date to search for value: This comes directly off of the previous statements, but I want to separate it out to highlight it. Don’t date someone just because they make you feel good, say nice things, or make you “feel” loved. Those are not in and of themselves relationship material. If you don’t feel valued or wanted, don’t go searching for that in a social status, relationship, drink, party, sports team, job, achievement, or anything else other than Christ. The main thing that blinds people from seeing red flags in another person is a search for value. We will look past all sorts of things just because that person says nice things about us sometimes or every once in a while impresses us. A good relationship will remind you of your infinite value in Christ, not try to replace it with something temporary that you have to earn. You are worth dying for. Not only the Son of God dying for you, but someone else laying their life down for you in a relationship someday. That’s the standard and don’t change it in a quest for temporary value (which

coincidentally is the inspiration for Harrison Ford's newest hit, "Indiana Jones and the Quest for Temporary Value").

-What to look for: So many people already have in their minds the description of "the one" for them. This list normally includes standards that are not only almost impossible to find, but are mostly shallow and temporary descriptors such as appearance, social status, employment, or personality traits. Even basing such a list on character, quality of relationships, and other more important qualities may not be the most productive thing, because you're still young! You can't expect a college student to be as mature as a father of three kids or a woman who has been married for 50 years. The standard isn't necessarily that they've already reached the ideals and are living the Biblical model of what it looks like to be husband/wife material, but are they headed in that direction? The number one thing you should look for is the ability and desire to grow. Not merely do they have potential, but are they actively seeking to grow towards that potential? So a guy can't just agree in theory that he's supposed to lay down his life for a woman, does he actually practice it? Not necessarily that he is already spiritual head of the household material, but is he headed in that direction? "He doesn't have a job or any goals, but he loves me. We're just going to live on love." No, you're going to live in a van down by the river, that's what's going to happen. If someone says all the right things, but doesn't back them up or live them out, it doesn't mean nearly as much as someone that knows they aren't there yet but has a plan to continue to grow there and is living out that plan. You're never going to find someone that is the perfect match for you in every way right off the bat. How long-term marriage relationships work is that each person chooses to put their partner's interests above their own, serve them, and continue to strive to be the best spouse they can for them. It takes work, so look for someone who demonstrates the ability and desire to put in the work, because you're worth it.

-Set and keep boundaries (physical, emotional, and even relational). Today's culture, especially in college, says that whatever feels good is fine. Do whatever you both want to do. But it ignores all of the heartache and damage that comes along with being intimate with the wrong foundation and commitment. God has set up that in the context of marriage alone is where any sort of sexual activity belongs. In that setting, it is a relationship-building gift that thrives within that covenantal commitment to serve one another. To spell it out another way, here's the physical boundary that God has set up in a dating relationship to keep you safe: based on the Scriptures, any and all sexual activity is reserved for marriage. Not dating or even engagement, but marriage. Sexual intimacy is not allowed based on how close we are emotionally or relationally (though it is a compliment to those) but is allowed based on the commitment in marriage. The new boundary guideline could be "what would I be upset about with some other man/woman doing with my wife/husband". Basically, that helps frame the whole "how far is too far" debate pretty

clearly, though I would leave room for kissing in the courtship/dating phase that would be the exception to the rule. Someone that is continually pushing these boundaries is not demonstrating either a commitment to mutual standards or putting what is best for the relationship above their own wants, which is another red flag. You are worth dying for, and you are worth waiting for.

In addition to saving the gift of sexuality for your spouse when you are married (or recommitting yourself to that regardless of your past), keep an eye on your dating life emotionally and relationally. Emotionally, don't get too invested too quickly. If you're planning your entire life and future around a person and you've only been dating a few weeks, you've invested emotionally too much too quickly. Relationally, if your dating relationship replaces all of your other relationships, it's a sign that those boundaries have been crossed. We all know people that disappear off the face of the earth when they start dating someone, and it normally doesn't turn out well. Maintain other friendships, spend time with other people, and believe it or not you are still allowed to have separate interests. Set boundaries, have friends that will support you and keep you accountable to them, and recognize that your whole relationship is covered in the grace of God.

-Don't settle. God has set up relationships to work best a certain way, based on mutual and unconditional sacrifice, love, and respect. That is how His children are to be treated, so don't settle for anything less. If he says that he'll die for you, but doesn't show it on a daily basis and is instead trying to selfishly push physical boundaries, run away. Maybe when he grows up and learns what it means to love and take care of one of God's daughters, then he can have another chance. Love is not primarily an emotion, it is an unconditional commitment to lay your life down for the other person every day of your life. That love, rooted in Christ, is the only way a relationship can work. Don't settle for anything less, regardless of how many other good qualities the other person may have. Don't settle for someone just because you feel you're "running out of time" to find someone either. You are not incomplete if you don't have a date or spouse. You have everything you need in Christ. Go back to that foundation and find contentment there rather than dating or marrying someone that is not good for you because they you feel you need someone. You already have your One, His name is Jesus, and there's no rush in finding the Two. You are worth dying for, and a relationship that is built to last will reinforce and build on that truth.

-Note for new students. The above is all rooted in God's Word and His plan for you, but this note is just advice that my parents gave me that I didn't understand at the beginning, but makes a whole lot of sense now. They told my siblings and I not to date at all at least the first semester at college. Don't get to campus and fall in like (normally right away people are not in true love which is a commitment based on sacrifice, they just really like each other, so they are "in like" not in love) with the first person you meet and start dating right away. Take a chance to meet all sorts of people and build a lot of friendships.

Even if you do find someone that has built their life on a foundation of God's Word, has Him as their One, and you become great friends, there doesn't need to be a rush to date right away. There's all sorts of practical reasons also for this (which I didn't see at the time when I heard this, but makes sense now) because normally when you date, you then want to spend all your time with just that one person. The problem words in that sentence are "all" and "one." You spend all your time (meaning you have a lot less time to focus on your studies, which is a huge transition your first semester) with one person (meaning you get to know a lot less people which is the opposite of what you want right away—you want a support group of friends, not just one person).

To dig into the topic of dating/relationships further check out...

- "The Mingling of Souls" by Matt Chandler on RightNow Media
- "DTR" sermon series by Aaron Stern at Mill City Church website
- Any of the relationship series from our youth group Bible studies/podcast (DTR, Amazing Race, and Under Construction)

Maintaining Old Relationships

While your new relationships with friends, professors, and others at your college are very important, don't forget about all the people back home. Maintaining those old friendships takes some work and is all a part of the college transition, and can even change from year to year. Here are a few tips to making that process a little easier:

-Contact with family. The biggest relationships that you really have to focus on back home are those with your immediate family, especially parents. It's a transition time for these relationships, as your parents are trying to figure out how to relate with you on a more adult level. You can help that transition by taking responsibility and initiative in the communication. Talk ahead of time about what you each expect this to look like, and try to agree on a reasonable expectation in terms of communication. If you get on the same page in terms of expectations, I promise you that you will have significantly less conflict. Vary between the different options you have to communicate like phone calls, Facetime/Skype, texting, etc. Sometimes a short text every once in a while updating them on how you're doing can be just as important as a long phone call. If you're using a video chat of some kind, consider doing that sometimes when some of your friends are in the room. It is really helpful for parents to see your friends and be able to put a face with a name when you tell them stories later on. Remember, good communication with your family does take some effort. You have to make it a priority in order for it to happen, but if you do, you will build a strong adult relationship with your parents and siblings, which is so important. Your relationships with your family will outlast almost all of your relationships with your friends, so be sure to invest in your family too.


-Friends back home. This may be a little more controversial than the advice on your family, but don't invest as much time and energy in your relationships with your friends back home as you do with your friends and people you're meeting where you are. This doesn't mean abandon and forget about your other friends, but part of the transition any time you move is meeting new people instead of just sitting around wishing you were with your old friends. Don't feel bad if you don't stay in as good of touch with your old friends as you used to, or if others don't talk to you as much as you would like. That doesn't mean that you aren't still important to one another or that you aren't friends anymore, your friendship maybe has changed into a more adult friendship, where you don't necessarily see each other that often but really enjoy it whenever you do. That being said, with all the technology and types of social media we have now, it is a lot easier to stay in touch with one another if you make the effort.

-Visiting home. Depending on how far away you are from home while at college, you may not even get home until Thanksgiving. But even if you live close, don't take a trip home until you've been at college for at least a couple weeks. Give yourself time to meet

people on campus, go to various events the college hosts, and get plugged into a local church there. Even if you do have a few trips home in those first few months, I want to warn you that the first extended trip home over Thanksgiving or Christmas can be very weird. You're now used to operating your own schedule and now you're back under your parents' roof and they have different rules than you want. You've been away for a while and you've likely changed as a person and maybe you'll have trouble relating with some of your old friends like you used to, because you're different now. Hopefully if you've been living out what we've already covered so far, you've been changed for the better and will have a lot of exciting things to share, It is definitely a transition, but it can be a great time of rest and a break from classes if you give some patience to your family, enjoy the home cooked meals, and spend time with people that you've missed. Take advantage of the opportunities of being home and thank your family for all they do.

-Writing letters. One lost pearl from previous generations is the habit of writing letters. If you don't know what this is, writing is actually using your own hand and a pen to write out a message on a piece of paper yourself. One of the most rewarding things you can do is to write a letter to someone back home. This handwritten note from you shows them that you care about them, are thankful for them, and still think of them. Send one to a mentor, church member, friend, or family member. Chances are, not only will that letter mean the world to them, but you'll also get one back from them. And few things are as fun in college as getting mail from someone. If you haven't been to college yet, that last sentence sounds weird, but it'll make sense soon enough. Start by writing a thank you letter to your parents, family, or whoever else helped get you to where you are now. You'll be amazed at the impact that a simple note can have.

As a reference, here's an example from online of how to fill out an envelope to be mailed. Don't forget to put your return address (left corner) or a stamp (right corner)!

Sender's Name Street Address City, State Zip Code	
Recipient's Full Name Street Address City, State Zip Code	

Practical Tips

This is the kind of miscellaneous section of this resource, hopefully touching on a number of different practical tips to help you not just survive, but thrive at college!

Laundry

“I love laundry...ing!” –That one weird guy on every campus

This is one of the first things you’ll have to figure out when you get on campus each year. Where is the nearest laundry facility? Do I have to pay in quarters? What do I need to separate out? What settings should I use? Should I do laundry when I have enough for a load or when I literally have nothing clean to wear? Hopefully you have some semblance of an answer to those questions, but just in case here are a few steps to help you take care of laundry in college (modified from universitylanguage.com):

1. Get your Supplies

- Detergent (either liquid or powder)
- Dryer sheets
- Laundry basket or laundry bag
- Fabric softener, scent beads, or something to help with college odors (it’ll come in handy, trust me)
- Oxi Clean/Resolve Spray ‘n Wash/something to take out stains (call your mom for help with this “advanced” step)

2. Separate your laundry.

You can separate your laundry multiple ways, but you can basically get away with four types of loads: whites/lights, darks, delicates (guys don’t worry about this), and towels/jeans/bedding. There is some overlap. For example, you could wash a gray shirt with either the lights or darks, or you could throw your bedding in with a small load of lights or darks (depending on the size and color of your sheets).

Most college students just throw everything in together and are fine with the results, but just be careful if you have something that you don’t want getting ruined in there. The biggest thing is to **never ever** toss a new dark red or purple shirt in with the whites. The results are fairly obvious. In fact, you may want to wash it separately once or twice to make sure it won’t bleed.

3. Pick the right time.

Are you an early bird or night owl? Doing your laundry when almost everyone else is sleeping is often the quickest way to get it done. At the very least, pick a time when you

can be around long enough for the whole washer/dryer cycle. Set an alarm so that you remember to get your laundry. Don't be that guy that leaves his laundry in forever, using up one of the machines for a long time. You may come back and find that your laundry has been put in a pile on the floor...or strewn about the commons with a sign that says "Free Used Clothes" by someone else who didn't want to wait for you to come back and finish up.

4. Collect quarters.

Sorry, doing your laundry isn't free anymore on most campuses. If the laundry room has a coin machine, keep a few crisp dollar bills with you just in case you need a little extra. It's becoming more common for schools to allow you to use your ID as a debit card for washing machines, which is convenient in an increasingly cash-less world. But if that is not the case for your campus, be sure to keep those quarters.

5. Choose the correct laundry settings.

All of those buttons and knobs! If this is your first time doing your laundry in college, the washer and dryer may seem only slightly less complicated than your calculus homework. Not to worry. First, check the tags on your clothing for any special cleaning instructions. Some items may need to be hand-washed or dry cleaned. Don't shrug and toss it in anyway; washing that wool sweater in hot water or throwing it in the dryer will result in shrinkage.

Also, a "full" load really means about two-thirds of the washer or dryer space is taken up. Any more than that, and at best your clothes won't really be clean/dry, and at worst you'll have caused a flood in the laundry room.

Next, choose the water temperature:

- Hot for whites, linens and towels
- Cold for anything you don't want to shrink or fade (including any whites that fall into this category)
- Warm for everything else

Remember, when in doubt: cold water won't get your clothes as clean as hot water, but it also won't ruin anything.

Next, choose the size of your load, if that's an option. If you are unsure if your load is a small or a large, choose the bigger size to make sure the load will get enough water. After about a half-hour, it'll be time for the dryer. Choose the setting that best describes your clothing. Not sure? Choose "normal." Also, make sure to empty the lint trap after drying your clothes. Your neighbors will appreciate it!

6. Fold your laundry immediately.

Unless you want to look like you rolled out of bed 24/7, put away your clothes as soon as you're done doing the laundry. Keeping them in a big heap may be convenient, but it's also the easiest way to make sure each and every piece of clothing you have is wrinkled beyond repair. If not, make sure you have access to an iron and ironing board so you can still look professional for a presentation or work if you need to.

7. Other option

If you want to ignore all of the above, just take your laundry home and talk a family member into doing it for you. It isn't the responsible adult option, but certainly a very intriguing option that many students take. Besides, some moms have way more advanced washing machines than the schools do anyways. You put your clothes in, and then come out a few hours later clean, dry, and folded on your bed! It doesn't get any better than that.

Paying for College

This is one of the biggest concerns with attending college, and there are actually a few things you can do while you are a student to help. First, find a part-time job to help manage expenses and gain a little spending money. The jobs that will best fit your schedule and location will be on-campus jobs, which every campus will have a number of. Most of these on-campus jobs are very easy money and you may even be able to work on homework during some of the desk jobs. Other colleges have work-study programs or internships where you can work a job on campus and the pay will go directly to your tuition or other expenses. The most common of these is being an RA (resident advisor) on a hall, but check your Student Life Office for more opportunities. Finally, check in regularly with your school's Financial Aid Office to see if there are any additional scholarships or grants that could be available to you. Getting to know the people in that office will be to your advantage, as they can be a tremendous resource for you and will find ways to help make college more affordable for you.

While there are a lot of ways you can live cheaply as a "poor college student," keep in mind that you at least have to eat some kind of food. Save money on things like coffee or various entertainment (sports games, movies, subscriptions, etc.) versus items like food or gas. Also, many products are just as good with the "off brand" than the normal kind, but remember the 3 T's that you never try to save money on by buying the cheap kind: Tires (road safety is apparently important), Trash Bags (don't get mad...get something else), and Toilet Paper (no one likes it when it disintegrates- get at least 2 ply).

Housing

“You can live on campus, off campus...or in a van down by the river!” –Matt Foley, motivational speaker

There are really only two main options for housing in college: on campus or off campus. The above quote is from a comedy skit that was written for our college variety show about a motivational speaker trying to sell a third option to students, but until that option comes about you're mainly stuck with these two. The good news is that almost every college has the option at some point to either live on campus or off campus. This is one way you can look at perhaps saving some money, if you can get enough roommates to make off campus rent (either in a house or apartment) come out ahead. Keep in mind the travel distance wherever you live as well as access to the cafeteria or having to make your own food. The school cafeteria may not seem like the most appetizing food at times, but at least it is convenient and will save you some significant time. Most students that move off campus also have less of a connection with the campus events and get to know a lot less people than those who live in the dorms. This is why many colleges don't let underclassmen move off campus, but it's a decision that you can choose to make whenever you get there.

Building Credit

This is something that I had not thought about at all while in college, but wish I had now. Your credit score is used to get loans at any point in your life (especially auto and home) and credit is built based on a number of factors, one of which is the length of time accounts have been established. One way to build up credit earlier is to have some kind of credit account being paid in your name (whether a credit card that you pay off every month, a utility bill for an off campus apartment, or a car loan) that you faithfully pay every month. Having a good credit score to start with will help you get a loan (for car or house) after graduation, so talk to your parents or a financial advisor as to what you could look into regarding your credit. Please don't just go signing up for all of the numerous “special offers” you'll get in the mail (see: junk mail). Talk with someone that is knowledgeable financially before you sign up for any form of credit. At the very least, don't get yourself into a hole by getting into credit card debt or not paying your bills on time in college.

Taking Care of Yourself/Staying in Shape/Avoiding the “Freshman 15”

The above titles vary based on whatever year of college you are in, but the underlying point is that you have to take care of yourself while you're in college.

Get rest- This is a huge struggle for all college students, especially if you have morning classes. Most will compensate for lack of sleep with even more coffee, which will

get you through temporarily but will not actually give your body the rest it needs. There's a reason that one of the 10 Commandments is to keep the Sabbath day holy. This Sabbath day is a day of rest, centered on worship, prayer, and the study of the Word. It doesn't mean just going to church, but also to actually get some rest. God knows that we need a day off, but very few of us actually take it. Sleeping through church on Sunday to get rest is the opposite of the design, keep in mind. Whether it's Sunday, Saturday, or a day during the week where you have less classes, have a day set aside each week where you physically get more rest and you take additional time to pray and read the Word. That regular rest will work wonders for you in the rest of your week!

Eat right- This can be tough in a school cafeteria and expensive on your own, but it is worth it in the long run. Try and at least keep some semblance of balance in what you eat (ie. not just fries, burgers, and pizza). If you balance your food groups a bit and especially monitor your portion control (all you can eat buffet-style is not always helpful), you'll be just fine. And if you don't necessarily know what the cafeteria is serving that day, grab a few friends and play a game of "Name that Meat" where you see how many bites it takes for you to correctly name whatever the mystery meat of the day is.

Exercise- There are so many different ways to stay active in college, so find what works for you. Build in time to walk to your classes and meetings. Grab some friends and make a team for an intramural sport, or better yet, try all of them. You could be playing a different recreational intramural sport each month for a whole school year if you want. Play a pick-up game of whatever your favorite sport is. There was a group of us at Concordia that would play Ultimate Frisbee every weekday at 4pm out on the practice fields on campus. Not only was that great exercise and a ton of fun, I also built some great friendships in that group as well. Others would shoot hoops every Monday night and then there's the crazy people that go running early every morning. Also, try and find a regular time to go to the weight room. Things can get pretty busy during the mornings and evenings, so I'd recommend, if you can, going in between classes during the day. Instead of just watching a movie or Netflix with a special someone, go on a walk together. Not only will you actually get to know each other better because you'll be talking the whole time instead of just watching something, it's good exercise too (personal testimony: that's how Dana and I got to know each other better, which led to us dating). Going on walks is a great relationship builder not just for dating, but just for friendships as well.

Spiritual health- As mentioned previously, your spiritual health is so important. Find time to pray, be in the Word, be in fellowship with other Christians, and receive God's gifts in the worship service. I'll be honest that I oftentimes did not do well with the first few categories here (especially rest) while I was in college, but when I was plugged in spiritually, it didn't matter nearly as much. I told people, mainly as a joke, that I ran on Soul Power instead of caffeine, but the more I've thought about it the more I think there may

actually be some truth to it. If everything else is doing well, but my spiritual life is shrinking, it's not nearly as good as if my spiritual health is strong and everything else is fading. I was involved in a student-led worship service called Praise every Wednesday night, and my energy level was significantly higher on Wednesday nights and Thursdays than other days of the week. That may just be anecdotal evidence, but being spiritually fed was the best thing I did to take care of myself in college. So try the "Soul Power Diet" (copyright pending) and let the Holy Spirit give you strength through the Word, God's Church, and prayer.

Other activities- One way to get past the stress of work and classes is to have other activities that you really enjoy doing, that give you energy. Some of them have been mentioned already (sports, walks, worship service, etc.), but figure out what that is for you. What do you love to do? What helps relieve stress in your life? Try to find a way to incorporate those activities in your schedule. Make time for them. If you love to laugh (who doesn't?), try going to the school's Improv group or spend time telling stories with friends at the lunch table. If you love to play music, find some time to go to the music building or join a band or choir. If journaling or painting helps you calm down, set aside time for it. Find time to serve others or get involved in your community or local church. Doing these activities may add something to your schedule, but believe it or not getting energy from those activities will help you manage all of those other items on your to-do list better.

Advice from College Graduates

"Be the best you that you want to be by maintaining the habits and hobbies that are life-giving, and letting go of those that are life draining. Be open to new experiences, but always be safe." -Ben E.

"If you're feeling very overwhelmed, seek out a counselor or a trusted professor. Let someone know." -Em Lee F.

"Learn how to study, and learn what a balanced meal at least LOOKS like. If you don't know how to medicate yourself when you're sick, or how to seek out a mechanic/barber/other service, learn it before you go." -Nathaniel B.

Getting Involved

Don't be the student that goes to class, does their work in their room, and never does anything else. You may still get your degree, but you'll be missing out on so much more that college has to offer. Here are a few thoughts on getting involved in college:

On campus- In addition to getting to know your fellow students and spending time together around campus, there are a lot of other ways to get involved. Join a club or

organization that interests you or goes along with your area of study. Don't join too many of these clubs, otherwise you'll quickly find your schedule being overbooked. Get some friends together and sign up a team for an intramural sport. Spend time at the student union. Go to a few of your school's athletic events, and not just the "big" sports but also some of the less popular ones, especially if you have friends on a particular team. Your school will have some kind of a Student Activities group that will plan various events, speakers, concerts, etc. for the campus. Go to those events whenever you can, as oftentimes they turn out better than you thought they were going to be. Finally, if something that you want to do or be a part of doesn't exist, take the initiative and start something. A few of my friends and I created and hosted a Spring Variety Show for a few years, some other students started a End of the School Year Bonfire tradition, and students that graduated years before me started the Praise worship service that still remains a big part of the campus worship life to this day. College students can do some amazing things when they put their minds to it, and you can be a part of that if you put yourself out there a little bit.

Off campus- Apart from all there is to do on campus, take advantage of the community that surround your campus. Whether it's a large city or a small town, most college towns are actually pretty welcoming to college students and often will have various events or activities with you in mind. Take the opportunity to become a part of that community by eating at local restaurants, stopping by local small businesses, attending community events, and getting involved in a local church. Being a part of the surrounding area is another way to make college a "second home" for you while you're there.

Greek life- At most larger schools, the fraternity and sorority system is a huge part of the college culture. I would urge strong caution in jumping in with these groups right away, as a lot of them have a very different mission than the church does. Most of them have a service component to them, which is great, however oftentimes the parties and other activities are contrary to the best that God has for you. Not that there aren't some of these organizations that are worth being a part of, but be very careful regarding what the message of the group is and check if the group's activities support that message. Oftentimes belonging to an organization, whether it's Greek life or something else, is just another sign of a search for identity and belonging that is meant to be filled by Christ and His Church. Don't join any group just because you want to fit in or belong. Join because it is a place that you can serve and a group that shares your mission and ministry to the world.

***One very important side note on the party lifestyle that has become so engrained in our culture as a part of the "college experience" for so long. We can't accept the notion that not only is it inevitable that college students should party, but it is a right of passage almost. It is absolutely possible to have an amazing college experience without getting drunk (regardless of whether you're 21 or not, that still doesn't make it good for you). The rising statistics on alcohol poisoning, impaired driving accidents, and sexual assaults

occurring around these parties provide a pretty strong case against it as well. Don't settle for the vomit-covered, very dangerous, and also depressing picture of "the good life" that the college party atmosphere tries to sell. It is absolutely contrary "to the good life" that Scripture offers, which is in resting in the promises of an overcoming, redeeming Savior who has given you not only infinite value, but a clear purpose and meaning in this life. Don't settle for temporary glory and in doing so, begin to exchange the cross of Christ for a bottle, high, or social status. Let us repent for falling into this lifestyle and cling to not only the forgiveness at the cross, but the healing that He alone offers there. In Christ and His Church, you have already found what all of those people partying are looking for: acceptance, a response to the troubles of life, value, identity, meaning, and purpose. Instead of looking enviously at the typical college experience, our hearts should break with pity for those who are lost and searching in all the wrong places. This is why college is such a huge mission field and you are being sent out as missionaries to your campus.

Advice from College Graduates

"It's better to go to a [campus] event on the fence about it than regret not going later." –Samuel F.

"Get involved. Take a chance and do something crazy. My high school self never would have done some of the stuff I did for Spring Weekend, Variety Shows, and Intramurals." –Tory P.

"Take advantage of the school's website, if there is a specific activity that you want to be a part of it will tell you where to go and who to talk to. If it's a student-led activity then your Student Life Office will be a great help to getting in contact with the student in charge." –Bethie W.

Car Maintenance

If you have a car on campus, don't forget that you have to take care of that car. Each summer before you head out to school for the semester, you should check your car's battery, tires, oil, filters, and brakes (and make sure your insurance is up to date). Make sure everything's ready to go, and the farther you have to drive to get to school, the more often you should do these checks. Make sure you find a place locally that can change oil and do maintenance on your car while you're at college, just in case. Don't just wait to do all of that until you're home for breaks, because that time at home fills up so quickly and it's easy to forget about it. Instead of just looking online for a place, ask around a little bit. I'd recommend going to the Student Life Office or local church and ask a few people where they take their car. If you have the name of a local individual who referred you, that can not only give you a head start in getting your car in, but also give you some piece of mind that you are going to a good place. Finally, make sure you have a plan in place in the event of a roadside emergency. One lesson that I learned is if you end up stranded in the middle of nowhere, getting towed by AAA to the nearest location may not be your best bet. I ended up going 13 miles further into the middle of nowhere to a barn that had been repurposed as a

very sketchy repair shop, when I could have been towed a few more miles in the other direction and ended up in an actual city. Score update: Brandon 1, system 25. Sometimes it's worth paying a little bit more to the tow company in order to actually be in a place where you can stay overnight if you need to.

If You Don't Have a Car

If you don't have a car on campus, you'll make it just fine and actually have one less thing to worry about a lot of the time. However, you will have to get used to asking people for rides when you need to go somewhere. Oftentimes it's easier to just hitch a ride with someone that is already planning on going to the store than to talk someone out of whatever else they had planned already. If a couple people in your friend group have a vehicle there, normally they'll do a good job of looking out for you and making sure you get where you need to go. Otherwise, take advantage of the many places you can probably walk to from your room and enjoy the fresh air and exercise.

The other item you have to look into is making sure you have a ride home in advance whenever you need to head home for school breaks. This involves checking with people that live in your area, and maybe even making a few phone calls, but make sure you get it figured out more than the day before you're supposed to leave. Also, just because you went with someone one time, you should not assume that you can ride with them every single time. Double check well ahead of time with your regular ride to make sure that they are planning on taking you with them. Also, be a good passenger and help keep the driver awake as well as giving them some gas money for each trip home (even if they try to refuse it, find some way to "forget" it in their car or buy them lunch or something).

What to Bring/Leave at Home

"I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess" –Martin Luther

You'll get a whole list of recommended items to bring to college, yet the vast majority of students bring way too much stuff. Almost every student I know finds themselves bringing less and less stuff to back to their dorm every year they live there. Some people may use certain items that I think are pointless, so I'm not going to make a whole list of what I think you should or shouldn't bring, but here are a few pieces of advice to help cut down on what you bring so that you can actually get it all there, and also have somewhere to put it in your small dorm room.

-Talk to current students and have them look at your packing list. They'll be your best resource in terms of what you don't need from that list and what you need to remember that may not be included on the list. The more you can reach out to those that

have gone to your school already, the better. Most information online is generic and is a good place to start, but getting specifics tailored to your exact school situation is best.

-Take less than you think you need. If you are on the fence about bringing something, try living without it for a while. In the majority of cases, you'll be just fine without it or you can borrow someone else's. This does not apply to your toothbrush. Don't ask to borrow someone else's, just take it without them knowing. Just kidding, bring your own. Don't be weird. If something is only going to be used every once in a while (like an iron or that third extra blanket you really think you may need), it may be something you can borrow from someone that over packed and brought everything. You can benefit from their over packing while saving space yourself. It's called beating the system and it only works every once in a while, so don't get used to it.

-Check with your roommate on what they're bringing. There are many items that you will not need duplicates of, so be sure to talk about that ahead of time so that you don't have to fight over whose Hannah Montana alarm clock you'll use in the room when you get there (I know those were all the rage in the day, but maybe they should both be left at home).

-Don't be afraid to take things back home each time you go back on a break. Unless your college gets super cold early in the fall, you may be able to get away with leaving most of your winter clothes at home until Thanksgiving Break. At that point, take some of your summer clothes home to leave for a while, and then take the winter clothes back with you. Reverse this process at Spring Break and you've saved yourself a bunch of space right off the bat! Also, if you haven't used something in a whole semester or school year, don't bother taking it back the next year.

Advice from College Graduates

"You don't need the stuff you're bringing. Pack the (non-clothes, non-required books) things you think you'll need, then purge half of it." –Nathaniel B.

"If you are moving to a different state, so like from Hawaii to Nebraska, be ready for a climate change and you will end up needing a heavy winter coat" –Katie D.

"If you are coming from out of state then plan to have a storage locker for your stuff over the summer. You will not be wanting to haul everything back and forth every August & May for the next 4-5 years. During the 4-5 (or more) years of college you will find that your stuff accumulates, so in May be willing to give some stuff away instead of packing it. Most towns have a Thrift Store that will take stuff that still has life in it." –Bethie W.