

# College Bound and Christ Anchored

## You did a Great job...

We appropriately spend many prayerful years and several heartfelt tears seeking to raise our kids in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4, Duet. 6:6-9). Near the end of the **joyous journey** and arduous attempts, we seek to help these budding young followers of Christ prepare for the next phase of life, sometimes including college. We see glimpses of fruitfulness from our efforts and prayers over the years as our teens turn into adults that are growing at their own pace in maturity in Christ, and we spill over with our greatest joy (**3 John 1:4**).

## Sometimes we lose focus...

It seems like at the snap of a finger we begin to focus our energies on which universities will best incubate our young one's academic, professional, and talent development. We look at several primary factors in our considerations: **1-majors offered 2- tuition costs 3- admission requirements 4-distance from home**. We unintentionally leave in the distant past the centrality of a church home that God says is to equip them (Heb. 10:24-25, Eph. 4:11-16, 1 Peter 4:10) toward mature "Loving the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your mind, all of your soul, and all of your strength". "Seeking first the kingdom of God" is a phrase that can be accidentally left with a layer of dust covering it after the last sermon, youth group message, or best family devotional time about it. Now what may gain our devotion is remuneration (money), career, and personal preferences. All that appears important is answering the questions, "Can we afford it?", "will they accept you?", "will you be able to get a job?", and maybe "will it be a safe Christian-enough environment for your growth".

## Finish Strong...

Someone may have taught us as parents the idea of students "making their faith their own" becoming "independent", but that language does not jump out of the pages of the bible. Yes, students are certainly to be shepherded toward being responsible, working hard, and even preparing to one day possibly leave and cleave. The Bible certainly affirms the idea of a person personally confessing faith in Christ and surrendering their life to Him. However, the reality is that **following Christ is to involve the healthy influence of others through a local church who cares for and oversees our spiritual well-being (Heb. 13:7, 17; Acts 20:28, Titus 1:1-9)**. At first it is parents who carry this responsibility, and then it becomes a faithful church. In the critical transition process parents are still responsible to guide, support, and in ways direct the efforts of the young adult growing out from among them to ensure that their college years don't inadvertently place the pursuit of Christ on the back burner because of a bad hand-off. We often still consider students worthy of our support medically, for taxes, and financially, and so spiritually they certainly should not be dropped at the curb. After all, Ephesians 6:4 does not say "until they are 18 or start college" but rather leaves the measurement of completion for parents at the point of maturity which may include extended prayer, laboring, and greater direct support beyond a mere number or local address change. As a result, every college consideration needs to include your strong leadership in church searching as a top priority with your student. I would suggest that if there is no known (researched, visited, confirmed) faithful church for your future student to attend in a given college town, then it is no college town for your student.

## Helpful Tips...

Before confirming the college list in your minds and wrapping hearts around temporal pursuits (major, campus activities, prestige that comes with your new car sticker or college gear, sports teams, or great weather), at least do the following with your student:

1. **Look at prospective churches online to confirm their belief in the Gospel, research their staff, confirm that they have elders, learn what they teach about gender & marriage, Genesis 1-3, and inerrancy/infallibility of scripture. (Feel free to email them to ask about these areas of emphasis)**
2. **Ask your current pastor about faithful churches located next to the colleges in consideration.**
3. **Contact the pastors of the church in the college town to plan a church visit at the same time as you plan a college visit.**
4. **Help the college student to make a commitment and transition plan to the church within the same week or month that you make a commitment to the school.**
5. **Plan to check in with the new pastor with the same intentionality that you check in on your student's grades, credit card balances, and opportunities to have your student come home.**

When you make these kinds of choices you potentially avoid the accidental hypocrisy of saying "Christ is everything" until it is time to go to college. You also help your teen plan out a life that places the pursuit of God, amongst encouraging support from a faithful church, at the forefront of their future. Much of the rest will be up to them and God as you pray about, support, and stay in touch with what matters most through their college experience.

