

Maintaining a Godly Life While Away At School

By Brittany Lee

Going away to college is one of the most exciting times of a young adult's life. You are away from home on your own, ready to begin a new chapter, a new start. Although college is one of the best experiences you will ever have, it can also be one of the most challenging, especially spiritually, not only because of the different temptations you will face, but also because it can be difficult to balance your time with God and your time spent with school. Naturally, you get involved with other people and activities while you're away. "You can be focusing on relationships with other people, clubs, even just working really hard on your academics," Rosalind Fennell, a junior at Amherst College, admitted. "You have to really make time to work on your relationship with God and building your faith." If you don't remain grounded in your relationship with God, you can soon find yourself going astray and becoming consumed in things that go completely against what the Lord would have you to do. Here are some guidelines on how to maintain a godly life while away at school.

STAY IN THE WORD

The Bible is one of the most important tools we have in maintaining a godly life. It is essentially God's instructions for us while we are on this earth. The Bible also serves as encouragement to us to keep pressing onward and upward, even though we may be going through hard times on this earth. God's Word truly is "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105)." Through the Bible, we can gain direction from God about how to live our lives so that we will be pleasing unto Him. We can make wise decisions about which paths to take in life, especially during our scholastic journeys. Try to plan out a specific time during your day where you can take the opportunity to read and meditate on God's Word.

TALK WITH GOD

Another vital part of every Christian walk is prayer, simply talking with God. In every relationship, there needs to be open communication with the other person. Without it, the relationship fails. Just like you're open and honest with a friend, you can be open and honest with God. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." The Lord wants to hear from us. He wants to hear about the good, the bad, and the straight up ugly situations we have going on. And honestly, there are times when you don't always feel comfortable sharing your struggles with other people, or when you don't exactly know how to express yourself. "That's when the only relationship left is you and Jesus, and it's really going to be your personal relationship that gets you through," says Monique Farley, a senior at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. "God hears what you can't always put into words." God hears, and He answers the prayers of His people. Just talk to Him. Prayer really does change things.

ATTEND A CHURCH/BIBLE STUDY

Attending a church or a Bible Study regularly is key as well, because not only do you have the opportunity to praise and worship God among other Christians, but you also learn more about the Lord, and how to

deal with various issues that you will face in life. Personal story: When I first got to Loyola University, I struggled to find another place of worship where I felt comfortable. Finally, I found an on-campus Bible study group, Disciples on Campus, which brings together students from Loyola and other surrounding colleges to discuss different passages in the Bible. DOC has made me see what I have to work on as a Christian, and has helped me grow in my relationship and love for God. Find a church or a Bible Study to attend while you are away. If there aren't any around, or you do not have a way to get there, get together with a few Christian friends for fellowship and devotion time on your own.

FIND GODLY FRIENDS

It is also essential to find friends who are working to stay in right relationship with the Lord. "It's important to have Christian friends who you know can pray for you and you can fellowship with," Rosalind said. I am not saying that you cannot have unsaved friends. However, it is nice to have friends who believe in the same God that you do, friends who you can discuss the Word with and receive godly advice from. "They help me stay on track. They make sure I'm praying. They make sure I'm reading consistently, and I do the same for them," Isaiah Thomas II, a sophomore at Penn State University, said of his friends at school. "It's good to have someone to talk to and let me know I'm not here by myself," he acknowledged. Friends like this will be able to support you and help you grow in your walk while you're away.

PARTICIPATE IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE

God has given each and every one of His children gifts and talents to be used not for our own glorification, but to better serve others and glorify the Lord. Participating in service in college is a way to give back to your school and other places in the surrounding community. Last year, Brandon Saunders, a sophomore at Morgan State University, participated in a mentoring program while away at school. "The mentoring was done at a church in Baltimore, and it was good to be in godly surroundings," he said. "And it makes you feel good because you're helping kids out." Many colleges have community service centers or organizations that you can become a part of and serve around your school's region. With all that God has blessed you with, it's great to be a blessing to someone else in need.

All five of these points are important to keep in mind while at college. You want to make sure that you do not slip away from your values and your relationship with God. Also remember while you are away that you are not only representing your family and your church family, you are, most importantly, representing the family of God. It's important to not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk of a Christian. The way you live your life as a proclaimed Christian could have a positive or negative impact on someone else and their walk with God. "Actions speak louder than words," Monique stated. "And just the fact that He even chose you to carry that title of Christian, that's an honor. I want to make sure I do my very best to uphold the standard for that." Remember who you are and WHOSE you are, and work to stay in right relationship with the Lord. Best wishes with classes this year!