

**Three Imperatives For Surviving College
With A Vibrant Faith
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As a student with a heart for God, you face one of the greatest barriers to a vibrant faith; that is, the obtaining of your education without losing your passion for Christ. It is in the transition from dependence upon your parents to independence, that you face the greatest danger. The question is: "How can you get an education which qualifies you for participation in today's complex society and at the same time maintain intimacy with Christ?"

II Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1 defines two characteristics of a vibrant faith; the Bible states:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,** And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The word "separate" in the phrase, "come ye out from among them and be ye separate," is the translation of the word *APOHORIZIO*. This is the word from which we get our word "horizon". It means "to mark off by bounds, to separate." The boundaries of this separation are to be clear, sharp, well-defined, not fuzzy and indefinite.

The word "concord" is the Greek Word *SYMPHONESIS* which means "a sounding together, to be in accord." It is as if believers were tuning forks with a special frequency. They are tuned to the same frequency as the Lord Jesus Christ. The world has a different frequency. When believers' lives "sound together" with the Lord Jesus, they make a melody which is a sacrifice of joy to the Father. It is impossible for a person to resonate in harmony with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the world. Romans 12:1-2 states:

"With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give Him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity." (*Letters to Young Churches, Phillips*)

In college there will be many pressures -- academic, social, financial -- to compromise God's standards. There will be many efforts on the part of the world to "squeeze you into its mold."

There will be many pressures to broaden God's horizons, to obscure them, and to include in one's life that which God has excluded. To succeed, you must be committed to separate living, to sounding together only with Christ, and to avoiding being squeezed by the world.

How can you resist and conquer these pressures? How can you maintain your passion for Christ in the face of these pressures?

There are three imperatives which will enable a young person to complete college with a consistent and courageous faith. They are the imperatives of making the commitment to God of: sexual innocence; spiritual intimacy and social involvement.

Sexual Innocence

First, make a Vow To God To Keep Yourself morally pure and sexually innocent. The Bible declares:

“God's plan is to make you holy, and that means a clean cut with sexual immorality. Every one of you should learn to control his body, keeping it pure and treating it with respect, and never allowing it to fall victim to lusts as do pagans with no knowledge of God. You cannot break this rule without cheating and exploiting your fellowmen. Indeed, God will punish all who do offend in this matter, as we have plainly told you and warned you.” (I Thess. 4:3-6, *Phillips*)

God intends for His people to be holy: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14) **The reason is that Holiness is the only thing which emulates God Himself: “Be ye followers (imitators) of God as dear children.” (Ephesians 5:1) One translator uses the word “pantomime” for the word “follower.”** The implication is that we are to reflect the character of God by our conduct, conversation and character.

I Peter 1:15-16 commands: “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” **God did not say, “Be ye moral for the Lord your God is moral.” He said, “Be ye holy!” It is possible to be moral and not be holy; it is impossible to be holy and not be moral.** In eternity there will be no immorality; there will be no sin in hell. There will only be holiness in heaven and the absence of God in hell.

There are seven important distinctions between morality and holiness. They are:

1. Morality is based on CONDUCT; holiness is based on attitudes and motives. Conduct is what others see us do. That is the basis of morality. Character is what God knows that we are. Character is the condition of our heart and is the standard of holiness.
2. Morality is based on CONVERSATION; holiness is based on thoughts. Jesus Christ said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Yet, a man can use words to conceal what is in his heart. In the sanctuary of a man's mind, his thoughts, which he

claims as his own, betray his true nature. Thus it is that holiness is based on one's thoughts and not on one's words.

3. Morality's standard is CONVENTION; holiness's standard is the character of God. Convention is the majority opinion. Without doubt, morality is a matter of community standards. What is immoral in one society may be perfectly acceptable in another. God's character is not subject to majority opinion. It is subject to analysis for understanding, but not for alteration.
4. Morality is CHANGEABLE; holiness is immutable. Anything based on man's opinion is unstable. When I was a child a woman who wore eye make-up was considered immoral. That has changed. This is not to say whether that is good or bad, but only to say that morality being based on convention is changeable. The nature of holiness is the same as Jesus, "the same yesterday, today and forevermore." (Hebrews 13:8)
5. Morality is CORRUPTIBLE; holiness is incorruptible. Anything that is changing will always change for the worst. A law of this lost world is that anything which is subject to change, changes for the worst. (The Law of Entropy) Man's morality has been changing since the Garden; and, it is always changing for the worst.
6. Morality is CONTAGIOUS; holiness is not contagious.

"If one carries in the skirt of his garment flesh that is holy [because it has been offered in sacrifice to God], and with his skirt or the flaps of his garment he touches bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does what he touches become holy -- dedicated to God's service exclusively? And the priests answered, No! [Holiness is not infectious.] Then said Haggai, If one who is [ceremonially] unclean, because he has come in contact with a dead body, should touch any of these articles of food, shall it be [ceremonially] unclean? And the priests answered, It shall be unclean. [Unholiness is infectious.] (Haggai 2:12-13)

You cannot "catch" holiness, you must receive it through redemption, regeneration and intimacy with God. This is the truth of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins. The five wise virgins were not selfish; they did not refuse to give to the foolish virgins because they were stingy. They refused to give to them because a man or woman cannot give the "oil of gladness," the Oil of Holy Spirit, to another. They must go to God for that Oil and the day will come when there will be not time.

7. Morality is CONCEALING; holiness is revealing. Morality is employed by man to appear to be something other than what he is. Holiness is transparent, revealing the truth about ourselves. When holiness is our standard, we are able to transparently share our failures with others.

Sexual Innocence Involves Your Effect Upon Others

I Thessalonians 4 addresses two issues: your personal conduct and your effect upon the conduct of others. You must not only keep yourself apart from sexual immorality, you must not engage in any activity which will cause another to be so engaged. In Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus said:

“Ye have heard it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath
committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Immediately, in Matthew 5:29-30, He adds the admonition:

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is
profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole
body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offends thee, cut it off, and
cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should
perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

Why the eye and the hand? Because men are sexually motivated by the what they see; and, women are sexually motivated by touch. Young ladies, you are not to dress or behave in such a way as to entice a young man to sin with his eyes. Young men, you are not to touch a young woman in such a way as to cause her to sin.

The phrase, “You cannot break this rule without cheating and exploiting your fellowmen,” declares that when you submit to the lust of the flesh you do so by using another to fulfill your fleshly desires. Sin is always not only against God; it is also against man. Likewise, sins are not only against men, they are also against God. (see Psalm 51) Remember love can always wait to give fulfillment to another; lust cannot wait to get fulfillment for itself. Sin is almost always seen in getting; righteousness is almost always seen in giving.

There is a difference between pleasuring yourself in another and amusing yourself in another. Pleasuring yourself in another means that you enjoy them while caring first for their needs and benefit. Pleasuring yourself in another does not allow you to “use them.” Amusing yourself with another means that you meet your needs without regard to their needs or their benefits. God pleases Himself with His people; He never amuses Himself with anyone.

God wants you to commit ourselves to Him completely: When you give your emotions to God without giving Him your sexuality, you will be a gushy, superficial Christian; when you give your will to God without giving Him your sexuality, you will be a impulsive and inconsistent Christian; when you give your mind to God without giving Him your sexuality, you will become a pseudo-intellectual Christian.

All over this country, repeatedly I hear men and women confessing the consequences of moral impurity in their lives. Don't sow seeds now which will reap a whirlwind as a harvest in your marriage and in your children. Sexual innocence is the foundation for spiritual intimacy, not only with God, but also with your life partner, whom God will bring to you.

God's will for you in regard to sexual relationships and in regard to a life partner is that you "go to sleep in Jesus." Before God brought Eve to Adam, He put Adam to sleep. Are you willing to "go to sleep in Jesus" and trust God to awaken you when He has prepared your Eve? Are you willing to "go to sleep in Jesus" and trust God to awaken you when He is prepared to present you to your Adam? If you are, then you will take the first step to surviving college with a vibrant faith.

Spiritual Intimacy

Secondly, make a vow to God to spend time with Him every day of your life in meditating upon His Word and in communion with Him through prayer. Eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ. (See John 17:3) The Bible states:

"And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father -- have personal knowledge of Him, be acquainted with and understand Him; appreciate heed and cherish Him -- and serve Him with a blameless heart and a willing mind for the Lord searches all hearts and minds, and understands all the wanderings of the thoughts. If you seek Him --inquiring for and of Him and requiring Him as your first and vital necessity -- you will find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever!" (I Chronicles 28:9)

"That you may really come to know -- practically, through experience for yourselves -- the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge (without experience); that you may be filled through all your being unto all the fulness of God -- that is may have the richest measure of the divine Presence and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself." (Ephesians 3:19)

"For my determined purpose is that I may know Him -- that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly. And that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection which it exerts over believers; and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into His likeness even to His death, in the hope..." (Philippians 3:10)

Apart from this commitment to spend time with God everyday of your life, I hold no confidence that your faith will make a difference in your own life, let alone the lives of others. This means having a Quiet Time every day of your life.

What is a Quiet Time? It is a time of intimacy with God, of personally knowing God. It is a time of mediation upon the Word of God and of communing with God in the Word. It is the highest calling to which you were called at salvation. In fact, it is an activity of salvation, for it is the activity of knowing God which is eternal life. (John 17:3)

When is the best time to have a Quiet Time? Early in the day is the ideal time for a Quiet Time. The Word of God states:

“My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.” (Psalm 5:3)

“O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.” (Psalm 63:1)

Men place the most important things first on a list. When you organize your day around a personal time with God, you establish in your mind and in the minds of others that this is the most important thing in your life.

Where should a Quiet Time be had? Alone with God. Fellowship with others is important. **Worship with others is important; but, a time alone with God is imperative for the student who would survive college with a vibrant faith.**

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

“And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed.” (Luke 5:16)

It is in this time alone with God that He will share His “secrets” (His covenant) with you. (See Psalm 25:14)

What should be a part of your Quiet Time? Principally, it should be the Word of God and prayer. It is through the Word of God that our Heavenly Father most often speaks to us. It is through prayer that we speak to Him. An important part of your Quiet Time is the writing down of what God has spoken to you in a journal or prayer diary.

Without this “book of remembrances”, you will often and you will soon forget what God said to you. In addition, this journal is where you record your prayer requests and God’s responses.

Why should you have a Quiet Time? There are a number of reasons but the most important are:

1. Communion with God in worship and praise
2. Cleansing of your soul in confession and repentance
3. Committing of yourself to God in accepting God’s commandments and promises
4. Consecrating yourself to the Lord in receiving the grace to fulfill your commitments (your vows) to Him.

Social Involvement

Thirdly, make a commitment to have no emotionally dependent relationships with anyone who is not growing in Christ. In my own life, I spent seven years recovering from the spiritual devastation resulting from the establishment of an intimate friendship -- an emotionally

dependent relationship -- with a man who was not a Christian. It began with my desiring to witness to him. It ended with my not going to church and not practicing my faith for seven years.

Remember Haggai 2:12-13. If you create close personal relationships with those who do not love God as the first priority of life, you will be drawn into evil; they will not be drawn to good. The prophet Jehu said to Jehoshaphat:

“...Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.” (II Chronicles 19:2b)

The Psalmist said:

“Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies.” (Psalm 139:21-22)

Psalm 101 states:

“...I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” (vs. 4b-8)

If you make friendships with those who live in contradiction to the Word and to the Way of God, you will become like them. (See Proverbs 22:24-25) “Friendship” in Proverbs 22 is the translation of a word which means “to pasture together”. This is a “sheep fold”. It is the place where sheep dwell. God declares that you must not “pasture yourself” with those who are not in harmony with Him.

You must not live like, act like, think like the world, or you will become like the world. In the 1960's a mission organization sent seven men and women to Los Angeles to live among the hippies. They were to act like, look like, live like hippies, in order to witness to them. The result: they were never heard from again; they became hippies and were absorbed into that culture.

But, what about believers and non-believers and/or Christians who are not growing in the Lord? You must reach out to non-believers. You must be kind to them and attempt to meet their needs as you are their neighbor. But, you must not include them in the circle of your intimate friends. You must invite non-believers to be a part of the assembly of Christians for Bible study, worship and preaching. You must not invite them into your hearts. You must be sensitive to the emotional needs of non-believers and allow God to meet those needs through you without allowing yourself to look to them to meet your needs.

There is a delicate balance here. You must not be exclusive in your relationships; yet, neither must you allow yourself to be influenced by those who are not committed to Jesus Christ, regardless of whether they profess to be Christians or not.

Three Dangers to the College Student

There are three great dangers to you as a Christian college student, even after you have made these commitments. They are: seduction's influence, shaving's impurity, strange god's idolatry. Each of these can be seen in and illustrated by the life of the prophet, Jeremiah.

Seduction's Influence: Do Not Be Seduced

The world's way is seduction; God's way is submission. The world's influence of others is through identification, that is, looking as much like them as possible; God's influence of others is through separation, manifesting the difference which relationship with God produces. Jeremiah 20:8-10 states:

“For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a **reproach** unto me, and a **derision**, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name. But His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.”

When the Word of God becomes a “reproach” to you (the translation of a Hebrew word which means something to be ashamed of or something of little worth) and when you are in “derision” (the translation of a Hebrew word which means to be laughed at, to be mocked) because of the Word of God, then you are susceptible to seduction. “Enticed” is the translation of a Hebrew word which means “to make room for that which God did not make room for.” It means to include that which God excluded.

When you, as a college student, begin to include in your life that which contradicts the Word of God, you will soon begin to justify it by distancing yourself from the Word of God.

This is the first step toward your abandoning a vibrant faith in the Lord. This is the seduction of the world. It began in the Garden of Eden with the question, “Hath God said?”; and, it continues today in the classroom with, “Do you really believe the Bible is the Word of God?”

The battle for your mind as a Christian college student will be the battle over your confidence in the nature of the Word of God. Once your confidence in the Word of God is undercut, the compromising of your passion for the Lord is a short way behind and the compromise of wrong friends and activities will closely follow.

That is why social involvement and spiritual intimacy are two of the key commitments for you to make. You will be greatly influenced by those with whom you travel through life. If your friends are agreeing with your professors as they attempt to destroy the foundation of the Word of God in your life, then you will succumb. However, if your friends, active Christians themselves, continue to remind you of the excellence of the Word of God and keep you accountable for having a Quiet Time each day, you will survive and prosper in college.

Shavings' Impurities: Do Not Shave The Word!

When confidence in the Word of God begins to wane, you begin to “shave off the Word.” The concept, “diminish not from (the Word of God)”, is common to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Jeremiah 26:2 states:

“Thus saith the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord’s house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word.”

God’s Word is of such importance that nothing, absolutely nothing, must be removed from it. But, once you begin to be embarrassed by the Word of God and once you allow things into your life which contradict the Word of God, the next step is “shaving off the Word, diminishing from the Word” to excuse your compromise.

The word translated “diminish” means “to scrape off, to shave, remove, withhold”. The same word is found in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 13:1. To “shave off” the edge of God’s Word is to attempt to allow yourself to “slip around the sharp edges” of the “two-edged sword” which is the Word of God.

In reality, all that is achieved is that you are bludgeoned to death with a club rather than sacrificed with the sharp, clean motions of the undiluted Word of God. When you, as a child of God, attempt to “smooth” the edges of the Word of God in order to “slip around the edges”, you lay a snare for yourself and others. When you listen to others who encourage such, you lay a trap for yourself. Because of concern for comfort, convenience, and compromise, men round the corners of the Word of God until they are able to slip around its sharp corners. For you, a Christian college student, this is disastrous.

Strange gods' Idolatry: Avoid Strange Gods

The final result of seduction and shaving will be your acceptance of strange gods. These “strange gods” may be the god Nebo, the god of education, worshiped by the Babylonians; or the Phoenician god, Ashtoreth, the god of sexual impurity or others. But they are not the God of your fathers. Jeremiah lamented:

“For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit...For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me

the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water....But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.” (Jer. 2:10-11, 13, 28)

It is one of the anomalies of this world that those who hold false beliefs seldom change them; while the children of God often abandon Him. Once the seduction of the world has begun and once intimacy with God has been sacrificed, the worship of strange gods will enter the life of the believer. This will not be manifested by your bowing down before an altar with a plastic god on it. It will be manifested by your relinquishing of a passion for a personal intimacy with God and by your focusing of your life on other matters.

It is in your priorities that you declare your loyalties. When God ceases to be first in your life, He ceases to be God in your life.

Conclusion

The making of these three commitments concerning sexual innocence, spiritual intimacy and social involvement will enable you to avoid many of the pitfalls which beset the faith of many older believers when they were college students.

1. These vows will establish horizons -- clear boundaries -- for your life. These vows will maintain your harmony with Christ.
2. These vows will enable you to survive college with a vibrant faith.
3. These vows will enable you to avoid the traps of seduction, shaving the truth and strange gods.

It is never too late to make these commitments.

Even if you have made them before, you should renew them now. Even if you have already failed in one of these areas, you should repent of that failure and reestablish God’s standard in your life. The Good News is that the only failure, which is fatal in your life, is the failure to repent.

These commitments are made simply by praying:

“Father in Heaven, I vow to You that I will keep myself sexually innocent with all, spiritually intimate with You and socially involved with all men, but emotionally dependent only upon those who are walking with Jesus. In the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

God bless you as you live in this world and yet are not of this world. God bless you while you honor God by the holiness in your life, by the pursuit of God in your life and by your sharing of your faith with others, both by the way in which you live and by the words which you speak.