

Enjoy a Different College Experience

You are in a unique moment in your life. You've heard that already. You can probably still hear the Dr. Seuss quotes and "one chapter is closing, and an exciting new chapter is about to begin" echoing in your head from the graduation speech that already seems so long ago. You are in a unique moment in your life because, for many of you, you're taking responsibility for your life for the first time. Yes, you have lived with responsibility and consequences (some more than others) before, but to some extent, there has been the covering of parents, other family members, a caring teacher or a church leader. Now, it is up to you.

The everyday decisions about when you will wake up, what you are going to eat, when you will find time for friends, if you will study and how often you will wash your clothes now fall to you and you alone. The transition into the college years is a unique moment in your life, not just because you are transitioning schools and perhaps moving to a different place, but you are, in a sense, experiencing a transfer of ownership of your very own life. It's in this transfer of ownership that so many college students make choices that cause them and others incredible pain and baggage.

As a student pastor for many years, I have seen students take ownership of their lives and live abundantly, experiencing the college years in a God-honoring, productive and exciting way. And I have seen the opposite take place, including the life-altering consequences of what our culture would refer to as "the college experience." Which will you choose? It's a lot to take in, I know.

If there is one thing I want you to hear as you begin the journey, it is this: *There is hope.* You can have an incredible

college experience and close this next chapter of your life with relationships, memories, education and a whole lot of fun, while avoiding the landmines that are in front of you. There is hope because of Jesus. There is hope because of what Jesus has done for you, what He can do in you and what He hopes to do through you. That is a fitting reality to consider as you start your journey through the college years.

Dr. Jay Strack is a good friend of mine and is the president of an organization called Student Leadership University. He has spent his life pouring into teenagers and helping grow them into the leaders God has called them to be. One of his frequent statements applies directly to you at this point in your life: "In everyone's life, there is a point where the little boy or girl chooses to sit down, and the man or woman chooses to stand up." This is a statement of ownership and responsibility. We've mentioned a few of the everyday life kinds of things that you must now "own," but in no way is it a complete list. Conspicuously absent from that list is the most important piece of your life to take ownership of: your spiritual life.

I know there are people at various places in their spiritual journey who are entering college. Some came to faith as a child, others as a teenager, some are trying to figure out what to do with Jesus and some are still far from Him. Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, we all have the same starting point: the gospel of Jesus. Your understanding of the gospel is the single greatest influence on what your life will be like during your college years and into the future. So, in your faith, it is time for the little boy or girl to sit down and the man or woman to stand up.

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