

10 Essentials for every Christian College Student

by Steve Shadrach

Only 1 percent of the world's population are college students and I commend you if you are one of the few and the proud that represent us in institutions of higher learning. It's one thing, though, to start college and quite another to finish it. In fact, most drop out somewhere along the way and just under 25 percent of Americans have actually completed a college degree. One reason students give up on college is because of "priority pressure", the constant stress of trying to choose what is good — versus what is best. If you're currently a college student, I know your life is swirling around you like a Kansas tornado, but unless you want to be picked up and swept away like Dorothy and Toto, read and heed "The Ten Essentials for Every Christian College Student."

1. Choose a Life Purpose

It is a choice and you get to make it. You have a free will, but an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God gave it to you. So why not revolve your life purpose — not your choice of major, mind you, but something much more basic — around the One Who gave you life in the first place? Don't let one more *Survivor* episode go by before you've nailed this down. Lock your door, get your Bible out, and search. As a sophomore I came up with: *To glorify God through knowing Him and making Him known to others.*" Not original, but it was mine. Having a God-centered life purpose gets you up in the morning, helps you make good decisions, and looks cool on your bathroom mirror.

2. Develop a Biblical Worldview

I'm reading an intriguing book by Chuck Colson called *How Now Shall We Live?* that's giving me a major paradigm shift. After taking two Tylenol, I admitted that I had a puny, self-centered worldview and forced myself to ask, "Am I looking at life from *my* perspective or from God's?" When we saturate our minds with the Word, we develop a God-shaped grid to run every song, movie and idea through.

3. Seek Out the Right Friends

My pastor says, "If you're trying to follow Christ, don't choose as your best friend someone who is running from Him." Studies show at least 50 percent of students have cheated and don't think it's wrong, almost one fourth are frequent binge drinkers and cohabitation (us old timers call it "shackin' up") is at an all time high. Be careful, getting tight with one of these folks could be more painful than watching an XFL football game! I'm not saying don't befriend non-Christians — that's the key to drawing them to Christ. But bind your heart to someone who is *really* seeking God: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Touche!

4. Join a Good Church

Away from home? No one to tell you to get up and go find one of those premium back-row seats at the fam's church? Now you can find out what you're really made of! Micro scooter yourself over to the late service of that local fellowship that: 1) Teaches the Bible as the Word of God, 2) Has great worship, and 3) Welcomes you and your friends. Don't just sit and soak it in, though. Give your time, talent, and treasure to those folks. It will pay great dividends.

5. Form Consistent Study Habits

I'm a total hypocrite even mentioning this one because I don't think I cracked a book until midway through my junior year! Yeah, you can buy tests and papers via the Internet, and supposedly everybody does it, but why not keep your integrity intact? Besides, having a clear conscience *and* an educated mind is a powerful combination! As I "matured" in college, I started going to *every* class, sitting on the front row, and finding the top student to

study with. Stay focused and you'll get to be part of those 24 percent of U.S. citizens who possess a college degree. Be all you can be!

6. Initiate Personal Ministry

To balance out #5, I must say: Don't let your studies get in the way of your education! The biggest lesson you will learn at college is what God wants to do in your life — and *through* your life. Find a group that's trying to witness and disciple others. Pray about living on campus, starting or joining a small group Bible study, sharing your faith and seeing God change some lives for eternity. If you really want to get radical, join the thousands of students who do short term summer mission trips.

7. Set up Dating Standards

Fifty-seven percent of collegians claim they're "sexually active." Think this is just locker-room braggadocio? Think again. Many are looking for sex without strings and relationships without rings. Over 16 million people are downloading their love life via online dating services. That's more people than have ever even heard of Roy Orbison's song *Only the Lonely*. Here is a profundity: You *will* marry someone that you date! Commit yourself to only date others who have the kind of goals, faith and character you want in a mate someday. Think I'm being picky? Exactly!

8. Maintain a Proper Balance

Harry Potter's Professor Dumbledore sheds this light: "It is our choices that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." Whether you like Harry's series or not, the prof's got a point. College is all about choices. With suicide now the third-leading cause of death among college age young people, it's time to adopt the foursquare life that Jesus sought in Luke 2:52: "He increased in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and man." WWJD? He chose not to sweat the small stuff, but instead to develop Himself mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.

9. Appreciate Your Parents

OK, so my wife put me up to this one. It is amazing, though, how much smarter your parents get once you leave for college! You begin remembering all their laborious lectures and suspect that maybe they did have a sliver of wisdom in those thick brains! And if you catch fire for Christ, don't make the mistake I did and go home and tell your parents they're going to hell. People most often become Christians through the witness of a family member. So call them. Visit them. Tell them you love and appreciate them; and if they oppose you getting branded with a "tribal art" tattoo — hear them out!

10. Keep Graduation in Mind

Nearly one third of freshmen drop out of college their first year. Congrats if you are part of the remaining two thirds! Also, know that those with college degrees earn nearly twice as much as those without. But more important than a diploma or an extra zero on your paycheck is what kind of person you plan on being when you graduate. My definition of college? *A window of time God gives us to make critical decisions and prepare ourselves to live them out.* Set goals, seek the Lord, build a deep foundation and understand that the end of your college career says so much more about you than the beginning. Oh, and have some fun too!