

TAKE **GOD WITH YOU TO COLLEGE**

Things to take:

- BIBLE
- DAILY DEVOTIONS
- DICTIONARY
- TENNIS RACKET
- DESK LAMP
- SWEATER
- TOOTH BRUSH



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mission

Take God With You To College



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Why Go To College?

■ It is safe to say that many people are today in responsible positions because they went to college. Higher education played a significant role in shaping their lives. A college degree, honestly earned, may not be a magic key that opens all doors, but it does open the portals to greater service.

As you begin your college career, bear in mind that you are writing a chapter of personal history. Your first day on campus is a date worth remembering, along with your birthday which also marked a beginning. Generally it is one's graduation that is deemed a milestone. Undoubtedly that is an important event, for it means the achievement of a goal. But graduation with its honors and distinctions just wouldn't be unless you had made a beginning at the other terminal of college life — registration. The successful completion of academic goals depends largely on the good start and keeping the goal in view.

Main Attraction or Sideshows?

■ I am taking for granted that you have set your sights high. I assume that you are among those who go to college to learn, and then, on the basis of courses completed, to graduate. Rumor and humor have it that history still repeats itself as to the reasons why some high school graduates enroll in a university.

In reading the sports pages of my newspaper I get the idea that some of our more talented athletes have their eye more on footballs than on books. Some have heard tall tales of good times at college or have seen pictures in *Life* magazine of a fraternity party. "That", they said "is the life for us!" An even smaller group consider the campus a good place where to meet the right people for eventual marriage. Should seeking Susan became engaged to that socially prominent fraternity man, whose father by the looks of things must surely be a banker, she and perhaps her mother, too, would consider the game worth the candle. The candle in this instance is the high cost of

going to college, which for socially ambitious people includes far more than registration fees.

Freshmen who come to college because of the sideshows are off to a bad start. When ends and purposes are not clear, it probably isn't too important to think in terms of good beginnings. On the other hand, if the high ideals of scholarship and the love of purposeful learning bring you to these halls, the good start is your chief concern.

It's Like Buttoning a Vest

■ People who dress up for an "old times" party usually aren't too concerned about the buttons. To get the first button into the third hole, or vice versa, doesn't make too much difference because they are going just for the fun of it anyhow. However, when you dress for your best friend's wedding or some other important occasion you are very particular. You start at the top of your vest or coat and make sure that the first button gets fingered into the first hole. After that it's just a matter of going down

the line. The two coat ends come out even at the bottom because you made the right start on top. My point is: Get the right start in your college life and you are then well on your way toward a happy ending.

The Literature Isn't Litter

■ Comes now what in pre-inflation days was called the "sixty-four dollar" question: How does one get off on the right foot? I shall not duplicate on the good advice given you in the pamphlets piling up on your desk. Your "orientation week" literature contains helpful information on curricular and extra-curricular matters. Read it carefully. It isn't just a "lot of bunk." If there is something about your courses or class schedules that has you stumped, see your adviser. He is there to counsel you in academic affairs. While you are getting started you may as well get started on the right track. It costs no more.

What I want to tell you pertains mostly to the spiritual side of college life. Much of what follows seems self-evident to some of you. To say, "Take God With You to

College," as stated in the title, may appear as superfluous as saying: "Don't forget to bring yourself." However, as some do fail to bring their true selves to college, so it is possible that they fail to bring God.

God on the Campus

■ A generation ago a freshman is reported to have said: "Good-bye, God, I am going to college!" In his mind God was identified with life at home, with childhood and adolescence. At home he prayed, read the Bible, went to church, because that is what dad and mother did. Other people in the tight little world that was home did the same thing. However, at college, so he thought, life would be different. He had free choice now to do what he wanted to do. Naturally, God did not fit into this scheme of things.

Without inferring a religious millennium, one can say that God is quite welcome at college these days. The cards are no longer stacked against a person who wants to grow spiritually while developing mentally and so-



**Famed Don Gehrman, a Lutheran
and alumnus of the University
of Wisconsin, wins mile race.**

Don Gehrman of Wisconsin wins the Wanamaker Mile in the Millrose Games at Madison Square Garden, New York. (Wide-World)

cially. Don't be surprised if such top administrators as the college president or the dean of students will urge you to take an active part in church life. Don't be floored either if your unchurched roommate will be "all ears" when you explain what religion means to you. Many students want what you have.

Giving God Place No. 1

▪ Some people think of God as a caboose to be attached to the end of life's train. Others, much wiser than they, consider God the power unit to be placed at the very head of life's interests and enterprises. This is in line with what Jesus Christ said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." In the order of the Ten Commandments God is given place Number One. Of the seven days of the week, the Lord's Day comes first. As at home so also on the campus, reserve the first place in your heart for God. Don't regard Him as excess baggage or as just another passenger back there in the plane. Take Him with you to the front seat and say with the Air Force pilot: "God

is my co-pilot." Put God first and amid the many academic duties you will have a place for everything and everything in its place. This settled, you come upon the scene in the fullness of your powers and potentialities.

God and Sense of Balance

▪ When you enter college with faith in God you come with emotional stability. Faith enables you to take the bumps without breaking your springs. When the going is rough you realize that Christ, your Savior, walked much harder roads to bring you peace with God. Joyce Kilmer says in *Prayer of a Soldier in France*:

"Lord, Thou didst suffer more for me
Than all the hosts of land and sea."

Emotionally stable because you are properly oriented with God, you can work with sustained effort. Endurance is what counts, for the educational journey is much like

a shake-down cruise. The survivors are those who keep a steady pace. Day by day constancy has its roots in the assurance that God's mercy is renewed each morning.

Speaking of emotional stability, I suspect that you may find yourself in a state of emotions called homesickness. I wouldn't mention it if I didn't know from experience that many freshmen at first feel lonely. The sense of bewilderment preceding one's adjustment to the new environment contributes to homesickness. Don't let it get you down. You will be over it in a few days. While the picture is out of focus don't draw hasty conclusions of what college life is or is not. Your evaluation can be made only after you have the feel of things. Furthermore, don't let too many blue notes creep into your first letters. Why upset the folks at home about an emotional condition you will have overcome in a few days?



God and the People You Meet

▪ A Christian who knows how God's Word sketches human nature and its outgrowing conduct is prepared for the eventuality of meeting people he had not expected to meet at college. Not long ago a Lutheran freshman entering a university not far from Chicago was deeply shocked upon discovering that his roommate had brought a bottle of liquor along. He was so offended by other eyebrow-raising horseplays in the dormitory that one day he packed his bags and went home. He dropped out of school because "he couldn't take it any more."

If you knew the case you would see that other factors were involved. However, there is this to remember: Many immature collegians enjoy an audience, especially a shocked audience. They are exhibitionists, or show-offs, who eagerly over-color their exploits and escapades if it assures them a horrified listener. Many a vociferous disclaimer of religion is not nearly the "atheist" he represents himself to be. If it came right down to it, he wouldn't think of practicing the forms of free love he



orally advocates. Don't be distracted by the rehearsal of radical views or the exhibitionistic actions of a student who has just come in. By all means, don't quit school because of him but stick around so that you can help correct what is morally amiss on your campus.

God and Moral Guidance

▪ It is good to have God at college for the sake of His guidance in moral issues. Before making far-reaching decisions in these areas consult with your parents and campus pastor. Some decisions, on the other hand, are "quickies" which must be made on the spot. The Bible tells you in broad outline what God's will is in moral and ethical matters. But not every particular case can conceivably be covered by Biblical "do's" and "don't." Neither can, nor should, human "authorities" in every instance give you precise answers in capsule form. The problem is yours to solve. This new freedom you have puts it squarely up to you whether you want to be a church-going Christian or a lapsing, label-Christian.

You will be confronted with other questions: "Shall I join a fraternity or sorority?" "Shall I dance and drink?" "How honest shall I be with the signing-out register of the dormitory?" "How far may I let this budding romance proceed?" "What about my conduct in dormitory 'mushrooms'?" "When does giving or accepting help in test situations become dishonesty?"

At times the question is whether you may leave something undone to do something else. Is it right to cut Bible class in your campus church because you are snowed under with work? You will be torn between two desires. College life can become very complex because of the many activities, some eminently worthwhile, some trivial. The question of what to do requires an answer from you. You may not be able to find the packaged answer in a Scripture text. You can't just step on a scale, deposit a coin, and get a card with a ready-made message.

That's why you need God on the campus. God gives you standards of judgment and absolute truths. He gives

you the privilege of seeking His counsel in prayer. While you are in God's counseling bureau you ask yourself: Would God be pleased if I did this deed, speak this word, think this thought, or post this picture? How does my Savior, Jesus Christ, feel about the decision I am about to make? These questions help point up the important facts and, in many instances, indicate the course of action.

Time and Talents for God

▪ Having become a college student you soon discover that the day is but 24 hours long. Your studies will claim a good share of that time. Don't draw your daily schedule so closely that you have no time for recreation and extra-curricular activities. In setting aside leisure time, ask yourself: How does God want me to spend it? A great deal of discrimination is necessary, as you could not possibly take part in the activities of all the several hundred clubs and societies on campus.



Talents, like time, can be wasted or put to good use. You can choose courses that develop your talents, or you can take "snap" courses and "Pullman sleepers." Since God is your partner in the learning enterprise it is significant to ask: What academic fields befit my talents? Will it be possible for me to serve Him and my fellowmen to a greater degree in this profession? Service must again be held up as the incentive to higher education. Secular colleges are breathing their last when the dollar sign or the prospect of smug professional security become motives for earning degrees.

As a Christian steward you have higher ideals. You seek a college education to increase your skills for an improved ministry to mankind, for building the kingdom of Christ, for glorifying your Maker, who in Martin Luther's words has "given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses."



God and Your Church Life

▪ Bringing God to college implies bringing vital religion and personal Christianity. When this is the case you will gravitate to the church on or near the campus and participate in its spiritual program.

As you would expect, there are some features about the campus church that are different from your church at home. Its teachings, of course, are the same. You will hear the same Gospel of salvation in Christ. Let that be the point of identification. Differences in outward appearances and customs won't matter if you keep your eye on the spiritual message of the church. What if your home church is a white clapboard building with a steeple, while the campus chapel or church is of a different design? What if you are accustomed to worship in a conventional congregation, while the college church consists mostly of students? Don't let the absence of elderly folk or infants make you think you are in the wrong pew.



Remember, it is always the Word of God that makes the Union lounge, the campus auditorium, or any other place of worship truly the house of God.

Your church sponsors a religious organization on the campus. It may be an informal group or a formally-constituted association called Gamma Delta. *Look for this name — GAMMA DELTA.* Save yourself a lot of trouble by heading straight for this group. Gamma Delta assures you of a balanced program offering Bible study, discussions of campus-slanted topics, Christian fellowship, recreation, and opportunities for Christian service. You will find Gamma Deltans to be red-blooded college students like yourself.

To help you get started in church life at college, let me offer a few suggestions under the following "Do's" and "don'ts":



DO:

1. Get in touch **immediately** with the local student pastor, or the parish pastor serving the college community, and inquire about church services and the student program. Consult him about any other problem you may have.

2. Attend the "welcome meeting" planned for new students at the beginning of the term.

3. Strive for regularity in attending the worship services as well as the events sponsored by Gamma Delta or comparable student group.

4. Fill out the talent-activities questionnaire handed you at one of the early meetings and check your talents, interests, and the services you feel able to render.

5. When registering at the university, fill out the religious preference card, making the requested data as complete as you can. Especially important are your campus address and the name of your home pastor.

6. Consider yourself a Christian ambassador wherever you go. Invite your unchurched friends and roommates to accompany you to church services and student meetings.

7. Continue your personal devotions. Let the Bible be your campus companion and textbook of faith.

8. Be a living testimonial of the Christian faith in your place of residence, the classroom, and wherever you are in contact with other students.

9. As your time permits, join worthwhile campus organizations and through them exert a wholesome moral influence on the campus. A good rule to follow is: Investigate before you invest. Know what you are joining, and why.

10. Volunteer your services early for committee duties in your Lutheran campus group. The feeling of "belonging to something" comes to those who work for an organization.

DON'T:

1. "Let distance keep you from attending the church to which you belong."

2. "Spend your Sundays 'shopping' for a church or 'visiting' them all. You would get nowhere in your studies if you visited all colleges in the area but enrolled at none."

3. "Keep your presence on the campus a secret from your home pastor or from the pastor appointed by your church to serve students."

4. "Discard good church habits, such as contributing regularly and helping out where help is needed."

5. "Let Saturday night socials cause you to 'sleep in' on Sunday morning."

6. "Clam up when your Christian religion is put through the wringer in student forums, dorm talk-fests, or in the classroom. In the latter case, speak to the professor after class. Don't confuse the professor's effort to make you think with a deliberate effort to destroy your faith."

7. "Cut week-day and mid-week activities of your Lutheran student group because you are a daily commuter or because you spend Sundays at home."

8. "Stay away from religious functions because the group doesn't seem friendly to newcomers. Smile, and the world smiles at you."

9. "Attend only the parties and hayrides sponsored by the group. Give your support also to the spiritual aspects of the program."

10. "Neglect to communicate with your home pastor occasionally to let him know how you are making out at college."

Closing Comments

▪ Begin gradually to discard your high school paraphernalia, such as sweaters, with varsity insignia, or pins won in oratorical contests. While they are valuable to you, other college students don't want to be reminded of high school achievements.

* * * Don't build yourself up to a heart-breaking disappointment by announcing to all and sundry that you intend to join a fraternity or sorority. Membership in these Greek-letter societies is by invitation.

* * * Local housing facilities, your finances and other factors will help you to decide whether to live in a private rooming house or in a dormitory. There are many good things to be said for dormitory life: Supervision through dorm counselors, convenience of eating meals in the place of residence, opportunity to participate in student government in the dormitory. Students living in private rooming houses where no meals are served might consider joining a co-op eating club where they can eat reasonably priced and well balanced meals. If possible, live near the Lutheran student center. The campus pastor will be happy to help you find near-by living quarters.

* * * Before going to the campus write to the registrar for literature on services offered by the university on housing, medical care, loans and scholarships, part-time employment, aptitude tests, curriculum counseling, etc.

* * * If at all possible, get season tickets to symphony concerts, artists' courses, and other events sponsored by the college or university. Make the most of these opportunities to broaden your cultural background.

* * * Remember that the heart of education is the education of the heart. Your physical, mental, social, and *spiritual* development will make you, in Tennyson's words, "a tower that stood four-square to all the winds that blew."

* * * In the eleventh chapter of *The Epistle to the Hebrews* Noah is named as one of the heroes of faith. The reason for this citation is discovered in Genesis 6:9, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Walk close to God during your college days and your faith will grow commensurately with knowledge.

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