



Talking to our children about going to college can be one of the trickiest things we're called to do as parents. We care about their future. We want things to go well for them. But if we're honest, it's also a time of concern: Will my child's Christian faith be strong enough to withstand the tests of college—the party scene, the atheistic professors seeking to brainwash freshmen? Will they manage their time well, or be overwhelmed with the amount of freedom that awaits them? Will they make solid, life-long friends, or be lonely and get in with the wrong crowd? Will they be happy, successful, and persevering in their studies, or will they wander aimlessly from one major to the next?

We often wonder if *their* choices are going to match what *our* choices would be for them. We may have nurtured hopes and dreams for them

since they were young. "I just know Michael is going to follow his father's footsteps and become a doctor. He's always been so bright." Or, "I'm sure Amanda will want to go to college somewhere near home. We've always been so close."

And some of us are wondering if our high school children are going to ever *start* thinking about college!

*Thriving at College* is a book you can read with your teenager toward the end of high school. It can serve as a springboard for discussions as you seek to raise your son or daughter to graduate college-ready. The book contains lots of discussion starter questions at the end of every chapter, which I hope are helpful for you. This brief file is an additional resource for you—I've put together a few conversation starters to "break the ice" as you talk with your college-bound child about transitioning to young adulthood and preparing to thrive at college.

## Introduction

1. Do you want to go to college when you graduate high school? Why or why not?
2. What are some ways you're taking on more responsibility as you get older? Do you find it freeing? Challenging? Stressful?

**Chapter 1: Don't Chuck Your Faith – Grow Closer To God**

1. Where are you at, personally, with regard to Christianity? Be honest. Are you bored with it? Do you have any doubts about it being true? Are there any questions you've been dying to ask, but don't think it's OK, or that anyone will have an answer?
2. Most people at a secular campus won't share our values, agree with our morals, or believe the same things we do about Jesus. How do you think that will feel?
3. What do you do *now* to maintain your relationship with Jesus Christ? Do you think you'll be able to keep doing those things on campus?
4. Do you have any friends who are living a double life—living one way in front of their parents and church friends, and another way when nobody from church is looking?

**Chapter 2: Don't Treat College As if it Were High School**

1. Do you make a habit of starting your homework right away, or do you procrastinate?
2. Is recreation / fun time important? What do you like to do to take a break?
3. Do you just end up doing things "by accident," or are you being intentional in choosing what you do?
4. Do any of the things you enjoy become addictive or distracting? Do they make it hard for you to shift back to schoolwork or chores?
5. How do you prioritize your work? Is it hard to do the things you don't feel like doing, even when they're important? How do you decide what to do first?
6. It's 11pm. You're living in a dorm with 100 other kids your same age, going through all the same things you are. On the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, some guys are setting up a crazy obstacle course and talking about ordering pizza. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, there are several groups having conversations...some hilarious, some deep and profound. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, two guys are playing some awesome guitar and a bunch of the girls are watching them. You're not remotely tired and no one is going to take attendance at your 9am class. You do have to read 150 pages for a Lit class by 4pm tomorrow and have a problem set due by noon. What do you do?

**Chapter 3: Be Intentional – Find Great Friends and Mentors**

1. As you consider going off to college, what qualities are you looking for in friends?
2. What do you think about finding a church near the college? Do you know how to choose one? What are some things you could look for?

Suggested activity: If your child doesn't already have a specific church in mind, go online together and identify at least three churches to visit. Agree that you'll talk about them afterwards.

3. What do you plan to do that first month or two at college to establish friendships on campus?

Suggested activity: If your child is considering a secular campus, go online together and identify several Christian organizations that he/she thinks are worth visiting.

**Chapter 4: Distorting Dating and Romance**

1. Have you seen any friends get in trouble by going too far, too fast in guy-girl relationships?
2. Do you think some people try to pursue intimacy apart from commitment? Why? What is your plan in this area?
3. Do you think it's relevant to think about what you're looking for in a spouse, before considering a particular "girlfriend" or "boyfriend"?
4. Do you think there is only one "right" person out there for you?

**Chapter 5: Refusing to Grow Up**

1. How will going away to college change your relationship with us?
2. What is the difference between asking your parents for help and asking them to do things for you?
3. How do you plan to take responsibility for your life in college, instead of depending on us for everything? How will you make big decisions, ones that have no clear right or wrong answer?

Suggested activity: Create a budget together for the first semester. What will they need to cover? What will you, as parents, cover? Will they be expected to work, receive an allowance, or save money from a summer job?

### Chapter 8: Wisely Selecting a Major

1. What (academic) subjects do you especially like? What are your passions?
2. What kinds of projects/activities have you pursued just because you wanted to?
3. In what areas have you seen success? What kinds of success? (Grades, contests, recognition by teachers, etc.)
4. What could you see yourself doing, career-wise? What if money were no object?

### Chapter 9: Recognize that Growth Requires Challenge

1. Do you have a strategy for taking notes during class? How do you plan to study outside of class?
2. What do you think of the idea that part of getting an education is about becoming a certain kind of person? Or do you think every class you take needs to give you specific job-related skills?
3. Have you ever struggled with jealousy in comparing your academic skills/accomplishments with others?
4. What's the difference between working hard and working smart?
5. If you struggle academically in college, where can you go for help?



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