

# Bringing Jesus to Campus:

## 3 Tips for Living Out Your Faith at College

Being a first-year student on a college campus comes with a unique set of challenges. There are expectations to perform academically, new freedoms to navigate, a vast sea of strangers—some who will become friends for life or one who might become a life partner. Add to that the political, social, environmental, and economic issues facing our world today, and it is easy to see how Jesus might get lost in the shuffle of the first year.

As a student, how can you maintain a strong relationship with Christ without getting caught up in the fray of college life?

To begin with, 1) show up for class; 2) keep up with the reading; and 3) get to know the professors. While these are classic tips to achieve academic success, they can also be used to grow spiritually on campus:

### 1. Show up.

Join a campus ministry group and/or local church while at college. Whether or not you grew up attending church, developing community during this phase in life is a crucial step in continuing to grow spiritually. Campus ministries provide unique opportunities (often with the most cost-effective travel options) through retreats, mission trips, and conferences. Many offer small group Bible studies, solid teaching, and worship nights. Aside from denominational ministries, there are many non-denominational or multi-denominational groups, so do not feel compelled

to attend just one. Local churches can be a wonderful way to find spiritual mentors to help you on your faith journey, and they often come with the bonus of delicious home-cooked meals.

## 2. Keep up with the reading.

The amount of reading required in college is exponentially greater than is expected in high school. Findings from a recent study in the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* note the reading requirements in higher education being one of the most overwhelming causes of anxiety expressed by college students.

Source: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1346>

In contrast, reading God's word regularly is a fantastic way to reduce anxiety. Immersing yourself in God's promises and faithfulness is a genuine source of encouragement. If you cannot find the time to read, try listening to an app or a podcast that makes the Bible easier to understand. If reading the Bible is new to you, start with one book or chapter. Make it a goal to read a Psalm or Proverb a day. Too daunting? Read just one verse a day.

But why is it so important to read the Bible in college? Remember those first-year challenges that were mentioned earlier surrounding performance, freedom, and relationships? Real-life scenarios for facing all those things can be found in God's word. Just like in class, it is much easier to prepare for the test if you have done the reading. As we get older, we find our faith is tested often. By *keeping up with the reading*, we are equipped to face anything the future throws at us.

## 3. Get to know the professor.

Okay, so Jesus is not a professor—or is he? His disciples called him *rabbi*, which *is* the Hebrew word for teacher. It is important to know your professors at college. They can help you grasp the material, assist you in obtaining scholarships, write reference letters for graduate school and jobs, and, in many cases, become lifelong mentors.

The best way to get to know a professor is to take advantage of office hours, those designated time frames in which they invite students to stop by to ask questions and get study help, etc. But sometimes, you may show up at a professor's door only to find that another student has arrived before you. Office hours are limited, and it is sometimes tough to get the needed one-on-one time before an exam.

Fortunately, Jesus has unlimited office hours that every student can access. We call it *prayer*, and it is the single most important practice you can exercise to grow in your faith. Maybe prayer has been more of a habit or ritual, but as you begin the true experience of *adulthood*, try to embrace the power of prayer. Need a little help getting started? Use an app such as 24-7 Prayer's Lectio 365. Have a tough time praying without nodding off? Try prayer walking with an app like Holy Here.

There is nothing more powerful than engaging with the Creator and God of the universe through prayer. Pete Greig offers some tips in his book *How to Pray*:

"The best bit of advice I ever received about how to pray was this: *keep it simple keep it real, keep it up.*"

## A message from Campus Coordinator: Debbie Garrick

*Every year, I volunteer for freshman move-in at my alma mater. My campus was built in the 1800s, so elevators are a rarity. The look of relief on the faces of students and parents when they realize someone is there to help carry their belongings up three flights of stairs is priceless!*

*As we begin unloading cars, I am intrigued by what students bring to make their new home away from home. There are quirky lamps, giant stuffed animals, bean bag chairs, decorative pillows, photo collages, and string lights...lots and lots of string lights.*

*I like to talk with students about their expectations for college. Amid the excitement, I often sense and hear an undercurrent of extreme anxiety. As I haul what feels like a mountain of duffel bags and bed linens up the stairs, I quietly pray that students who know Jesus have not left him behind with their high school diplomas. I pray that those who do not know him will find Him early in their college experience.*

*So, as you are packing for the upcoming semester, don't forget to bring Jesus with you. I promise He will bring much more comfort than a giant stuffed teddy bear could ever provide.*