


Closing

By Christina Quick

A photograph of a person with long dark hair, wearing a white shirt, sitting at a desk. They are looking down at a white document in front of them. A laptop is open on the desk behind the document. The background is a blurred office setting. The image is partially obscured by a large green shape on the left side of the page.

Tim Czaja came to Valley Forge Christian College in Phoenixville, Pa., in 2002. A former heroin addict, he had graduated from a Teen Challenge drug rehabilitation program only a few months before.

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in on **GOOD**



TIPS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AT COLLEGE



As he pursued a degree in psychology, the new Christian was also intent on seeking God's will for his life. Today Czaja, who is working on his master's degree and planning a future in addictions counseling, says

he feels much closer to God than he did three years ago.

"When I came to college, I knew I wanted to become more founded in my beliefs and in my faith," Czaja says. "The experiences I had and people I met helped me do that. Some of the professors and students I came in contact with really impacted my life for Christ."

A recent study revealed that most college freshmen have an interest in spirituality. Yet an alarming number of Christians drop out of church and forsake their faith before walking down the aisle as graduating seniors.

Statistics aside, college doesn't have to be a time of spiritual decline. On the contrary, the college years can be a perfect time to develop a deeper commitment to God.

"For most students, attending college is one of the most challenging times in their lives because they are placed in circumstances that may be different from the context in which they were raised," says Dan Mortensen, vice president of student life at Valley Forge. "But these new people, ideas and experiences are tools that the Lord can use to help students develop into the people He wants them to be."

If you or someone you know is college-bound, the following tips can help make the college years as enriching spiritually as they are academically.

GET REAL.

College is a time of self-discovery. Students who have just left high school are moving toward independence and assuming greater responsibility. They are learning about and honing their skills and talents, setting goals for the future and discovering who they are and what they want to become.

Spiritually, many students are exploring their place in God's plan and determining God's place in their lives. They are making more of their own decisions about church attendance, friends, time management and entertainment.

Dayton Kingsriter, Christian Higher Education national director for the Assemblies of God, says this is a crucial time in which many students either walk away from God or decide to get real with Him and

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'THE LOCAL CHURCH SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE

develop into the kind of people He wants them to become.

"College is often the first time a student is away from home for an extended period," says Kingsriter. "How they handle that independence is often an indicator of how they will develop spiritually."

Kingsriter advises students to make spiritual growth a goal during the college years, pursuing it through daily prayer and Bible reading, worship, Christlike choices, and mentoring relationships with

other Christians.

"An intimate relationship with God will lead to a lifestyle change because you want to become more like Him," Kingsriter says. "Words without a relationship will not lead to a lifestyle change."

GET PLUGGED IN

Going to college often means moving to a new town — away from friends, family and church. Just as it's important to make new friends in college, it is vital for students to

attend a local church.

"The local church cannot be replaced even by the spiritual atmosphere at a Christian university," says Trish Trewern, assistant chaplain at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, Texas. "The need to be plugged in to a local church may be even stronger for students who are away from home and family, some for the first time in their lives."

Valley Forge's Mortensen notes that church attendance not only

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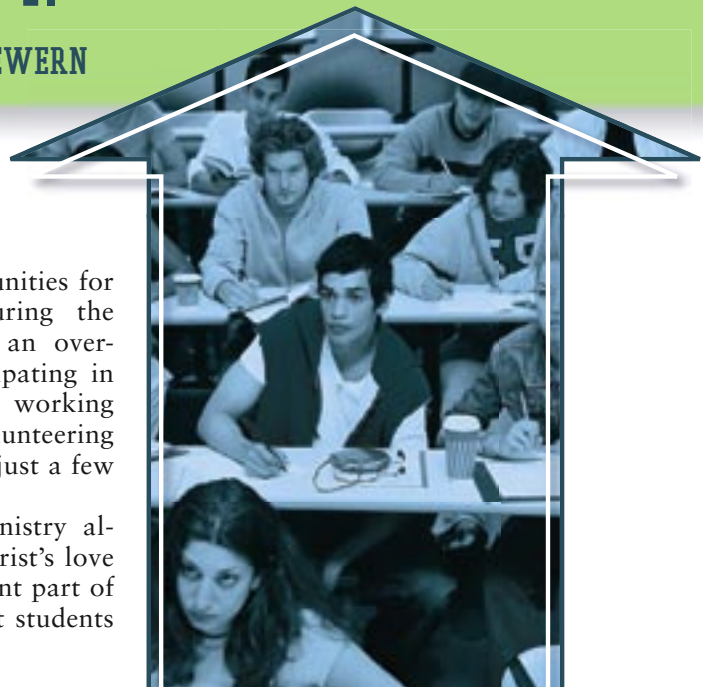
strengthens students spiritually, but also allows them to interact with Christians of all ages.

"The Christian college environment can feel rather uni-generational, with students primarily interacting with people their own age," says Mortensen. "While there are some unique advantages of this environment, there is also the downside of not learning from other generations. The church is God's chosen instrument for building His kingdom."

GET INVOLVED

There are many opportunities for ministry involvement during the college years. Going on an overseas missions trip, participating in a Christian drama group, working in a soup kitchen or volunteering in the church nursery are just a few possibilities.

Getting involved in ministry allows students to share Christ's love with others — an important part of spiritual development. But students



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should be careful not to overdo it. Choosing one or two worthy causes and pouring energy into those things will help prevent burnout and over-scheduling.

GET IT TOGETHER

With classes, clubs, sports, social events, homework and perhaps even a job competing for the average student's time and attention, it's easy to feel overwhelmed in college. However, the most successful students are usually those who set priorities and organize accordingly.

If maintaining a 4.0 grade point average is important, a student will need to give up television time to make it happen. Likewise, if spiritual growth is a priority, Christian students must carve out a place for God each day.

Czaja says he found it useful to schedule daily personal devotion times in a planner along with his classes, meetings and work hours.

"That method worked well for me," he says. "If I scheduled it, I usually followed it."

Carlo Strazzullo, a recent Valley Forge graduate, says that when his spiritual life started to lag during his junior year, he knew it was time to cut back on his commitments.

In addition to being a full-time student, Strazzullo worked full-time, served on the Student Government Association, headed a community-service project and played soccer.

"It got to be too much," he says. "I noticed I was missing some of the joy

in my life. Serving God became more of a chore. When that happens, you need to step back and assess some things and make some changes. God needs to come first." ■

Christina Quick is staff writer for Today's Pentecostal Evangel.

E-mail your comments to pe@ag.org.



ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23
(See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
Romans 10:13

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."
John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."
Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

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