

College 101

'Life that is truly life.'
(1 Timothy 6:19)

by Peter Walker

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I dedicate this booklet to four fine young men:
Daniel Green, Kody Roberts, Kerim
Annagurbanov and Owen Edwards.

***'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord
make his face shine on you and be gracious
to you; the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.'*** (Numbers 6:24-26)

*This booklet is available free as a PDF at
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Introduction

Going to college is a fresh start, a new chapter. It's exciting, but also challenging. You might be nervous.

First, let's not make the same mistake we did going into high school. Let's not 'fear' people, and let's not 'love' people. What I mean by this, is let's not want people's approval and acceptance, more than we want God's approval and blessing. You know what I mean?

Let's learn from all the other 'fresh starts' we've had in life, where we quickly fell into the wrong crowd, or a wrong moral path. Let's start this new chapter in college with God's Spirit in us, and a strong sense of who it is we want to please: Jesus Christ.

'Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.'
(Proverbs 29:25)

In this short booklet I hope to encourage you and prepare you to be strong, steady and full of joy, from day one in college!

I also want to encourage you to read through this booklet if you are *already* in college – and maybe have been for a number of years. Why? Because Jesus is a great Redeemer. Maybe you did not have the strong spiritual start or 'stand' in college that you wish you did. It's never too late in Jesus. We will start this booklet looking at 'getting right', or back to a

fresh start, no matter where you are at
spiritually, or what stage of college you are in.

'God's mercies are new every morning...'
(Lamentations 3:23)

Identity

'You are not your own; you were bought at a price...' (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

God owns you. This is good news, actually, and I hope it takes pressure off you.

And the truth is, God owns everyone.

'All souls are mine.' (Ezekiel 18:4)

When your friends are inviting you to look at, touch, and take wrong things, the real reason you hold back – or *should* hold back – from joining them, is the same reason *they* should hold back, too: because God owns you, and God owns them.

I hope this gives you an 'anchor', a strong sense in your spirit. We believe in Jesus, yes. But we believe in him because he is God of everyone. And the truth is, Jesus called *everyone* to believe in him, to follow him, to bend the knee to him.

'At the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord.' (Philippians 2:10)

So do not be ashamed to stand apart from the world. Do not be ashamed to tell your friends that you cannot go there, do this, look at that... Tell them that you believe in Jesus and follow him, and you don't believe these things are right to do. You can be gentle. You can be

humble. But you must be bold and straight and strong.

‘Blessed is the person who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the Lord...’ (Psalm 1:1-2)

Jesus calls all people to believe in him. When we do, when we turn our hearts to Jesus, we become citizens of heaven. (Philippians 3:20) We continue to live here on earth, but we don't *belong* to the world. We belong to Christ. And although it might feel like you are a stranger here, a foreigner, the truth is that Jesus owns it all. He owns the world that he made, and he owns every soul that lives. He owns the animals, the land and people. And he is coming again to judge every person.¹

So don't waver. Be strong and true to your identity as a disciple of Jesus. Let the crowds pass you by when they are in darkness. Be left alone at home, and spend time with the Lord, rather than go to places and gatherings where sexual immorality and folly are being celebrated, served. Rest at home, spend time in the Scriptures, listen to worship music, and pray for your friends.

Use this time, rather, to reach out to other Christians who could join you for true, upright and God-honoring relationships and fun!

¹ Matthew 25:31-32; Acts 17:24-25

'Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.' (2 Timothy 2:22)

When I was a teenager the Lord called me to repentance and faith in Jesus. It was a lonely time, honestly, for a few months, because I had to pull back from nearly all my friends, and nearly all my usual social activity. Why? Because it was soaked in immorality – guys and girls drinking, smoking, gossiping, sexual immorality (i.e. sexual relations before marriage), etc.

The Lord helped me be open and honest with my friends that I had put my faith in Jesus now, that I believed in him, and was trying to follow him. It was hard to stand with Christ in this open way, because people would mock, and quite frankly just cool off, distance themselves.

But something really interesting happened only a few months into this new path of faith, and I truly didn't see it coming. My friends of old began approaching me one at a time in different moments and circumstances, to ask me about my faith. Little by little (but quite quickly, actually) new relationships with the same friends were being established, based on the new person that I was.

People had watched my faith from a distance – *Was it real? Was I actually going to walk the walk? Could I be trusted as a person of faith?*

After they realized that I was a new person in Jesus, they could trust me with some deeper things in their own lives. Friends began sharing with me some true hurts in their home life (which they never shared with me when I was just a 'friend of the world'). People began asking me straight to explain to them about my new 'belief' in Jesus, and we would sit and talk for hours. Some friends asked if they could come to church with me.

When we are true to our identity in Jesus, and willing to be 'alone', and even a little lonely for him, he can then use us – trust us – to represent him and his gospel to those around us.

Have you made a true and strong commitment to Jesus in your heart and life? I'm not talking about a secret one deep down, but an honest one that defines your identity and your actions. *Do you feel you need to make a stronger decision for the Lord today?*

'You must choose this day whom you will serve...' (Joshua 25:15)

If this is you, that is OK, and God welcomes you to go deeper with him. It is the same call, the same 'door'. It is the '*door*' of Jesus Christ. We go through that door by repenting of our sin, and putting our faith in Jesus.

You may be just starting out in college (or packing the car to drive there for the first time!); or you may be a couple years into college. But

every day is a new day to draw near to God, to come back to him. Here is a prayer you could make your own, if you pray it in faith to Jesus Christ:

Dear Lord Jesus, I need you. I want to truly give my life to you, and make my identity a follower of you, a true Christian. I have wandered. I have been unclear. I have sinned and allowed myself to be carried by the crowd. I am sorry. I want my citizenship to be in heaven, not in the world. Dear Jesus, please forgive me. Please help me now to turn away from sin in my own life. Help me to be practical about this, and do what I need to do to get rid of bad thinking, bad habits and wrong behaviors. Thank you for loving me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen and amen!

If you have prayed this from your heart, my friend, you are marked by God with the Holy Spirit. He has put his Holy Spirit in you, and you are a new creation, a citizen of heaven.²

'Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come!'
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

So let's start now! No matter where you are at in college, let's start now with a new and fresh identity in Jesus Christ. Be at peace. Know who you are. Be confident to stand apart from the crowd, and to decline invites to

² Ephesians 1:14; Philippians 3:20

compromising places and groups. Be confident! You honor Jesus in this, and he is with you.

‘There is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents...’ (Luke 15:7)

Lonely?

‘Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’

(Hebrews 13:5)

This verse above has 2 key parts. Let’s break it down...

First, God is calling us to not *‘love money’*. This is a trap for both the rich and the poor. In the Bible we see examples of very wealthy people, but who did *not* love money. They loved God. They were healthy. They were safe, spiritually. We see other examples where poor people loved money more than God. They were rebuked by God, and lost even the little they had, because they had held it more dearly than God himself.³

Let me tell you a personal story regarding ‘love of money’. I grew up a ‘missionary kid’, and traveled a lot. I saw extreme poverty across the globe, and often felt very well-off in those situations. I was ‘rich’ by comparison, just because I had clothes, family, somewhere to sleep and a guarantee of dinner that night.

But then I remember moving to America for one year when I was 7 years old. We were given a house to live in, in a very wealthy community. I was enrolled in the local school.

³ Luke 19:11-27

I remember becoming aware of my 'economic status' compared to the kids around me. Not all of them, but a lot of them, and we tend to focus on the ones that have *more* than us. I remember starting to see and feel the 'differences'. One of the most impactful experiences I had was when it was the last day of school, and we were giving our teacher gifts, saying goodbye. I had only a very small gift, more like a token, to give my teacher – a photo, a note and a card. I remember suddenly feeling embarrassed, even humiliated, because my friends were bringing up to the teacher big, wrapped, expensive gifts, and I had only something really small to offer.

Now, skipping forward many years after that, let me tell you why it is important to be 'free' from a love of money – or free from 'shame' about what we do not have. When I was a teenager, still a missionary kid, I was again surrounded by a community of quite wealthy young people. If you have any 'shame' in your heart or mind about your money status, you can be vulnerable to the 'woos' of the rich. You can find yourself 'needing' their admiration, their acceptance, their approval. You are starry-eyed about their wealth, and so you are at risk of giving in to them. I found myself denying the truth of my own inheritance (*faith, love, loyalty, humility, generosity*) and striving for the admiration of the rich and the beautiful. (Often 'beautiful' *because* they are rich, not because they are more beautiful naturally than any other person!)

In my relative poverty, I had a *'love of money'* that caused me to lust, wander, sin, serve.

'Jesus said, 'You cannot serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and money.' (Matthew 6:24)

I have known people – maybe you have, too? – that are 'content' with what they have. I'm referring to those that have less than others, but have such quiet dignity, such calm humility. They are not ashamed of their home, their family, their lack of resources. They smile. They share. They hold their head high. These are the most beautiful people I see. Truly. Their eyes shine. I think it is because they are walking in the spirit of truth, the spirit of Hebrews 13:5. They are honoring God in their contentedness. They are in a safe place.

'Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.' (Proverbs 31:30)

Now let's talk a little about loneliness, and the second part of Hebrews 13:5 – ***'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'***

You know, when we stand with Christ, we stand apart from the world. There is a moment of changing sides, and this can be a lonely step. It can feel like we are outside of 'life'. It can feel lonely, a little left out or left behind.

The opposite is actually true. When you stand with Christ, you stand in Truth. You stand in the very Spirit of Truth. It can feel lonely, but you are not alone. You will never again be alone. God of the universe, in Jesus Christ, is with you. His Spirit is in you, and around you.

You close the door to your dorm or your apartment, and Jesus is there. You can sit quietly with him. You can talk out loud to him. You can listen to his voice, his whisper. You can close your eyes and allow his Spirit to carry you in visions and insights and promises and power.

‘Jesus said, ‘My sheep know my voice.’
(John 10:27)

Jesus actually told us we should be glad that he was leaving the earth, because it meant he would be pouring out his Spirit on us:

‘The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said... If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father...’ (John 14:26,28)

And remember, my friend, Jesus is not about ‘mere words’. He is not simply there to comfort us – though he is the great Comforter, Counselor.⁴ No, he comes *to* us in power, and *through* us in power.

⁴ Isaiah 9:6

Peace

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' (John 14:27)

Jesus gives a different kind of peace. Different to the kind of peace the world gives. The peace Jesus gives can be in a storm, in a dorm! In the midst of a sense of loneliness, or isolation, Jesus can descend on your heart, your mind, your very soul, with a wind of comfort. He can descend on you like mist, like atmosphere, and set your feet on a rock. Where you feel lost, you can feel found. Where you feel in deep waters, you can feel suddenly warmed, embraced. Jesus is with you, and gives peace in any circumstance.

'Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast... Even the darkness will not be dark to you... for darkness is as light to you.'
(Psalm 139:7-12)

My friend, even as the peace that Jesus gives is different, so is this 'faith' talk of ours. Right? Sometimes I feel like I'm crazy, thinking and living within this realm of faith. It seems so

'other' to the mindsets and 'realities' of people around me, that I sometimes lose confidence.

Well, it is different! It is a different 'reality' to that of people around us, the reality of the world. Look at what Paul says here:

'What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God... we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.' (1 Corinthians 2:12-13)

I find this comforting. When I see myself 'from the outside', and think I'm crazy to see things in light of Jesus, in light of the gospel, in light of God's Word... I remember these words of Paul. Yes, we have opened ourselves up to the light of God, the revelation of Jesus, and we now live, walk, think, pray, in a different spiritual reality to the one we 'see' and 'touch' here on earth.

Do you need a new measure of confidence in your faith? Do you need a fresh touch from the Lord – for courage, for conviction, for joy? Here is a prayer that might help you express this desire to God. Pray in faith. Pray in humility.

Dear Jesus, I need more of you. I need your help to let go, and allow more of your Spirit to define my reality. I need more faith like a child, to just see, believe, and rest in you. Please help me, Lord, to grow deeper in you. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Don't worry about people's opinions of you and your faith. Do you have a Bible? If not, please make that your next purchase. Consider one of these two versions, just because they are accurate and in contemporary language: NIV or ESV.

I read one chapter of the Bible each day. And then I sit quietly for a few minutes and pray to the Lord, and listen to the Lord. I sometimes like to listen to a worship song as well. This is what I call a 'quiet time', and it really only takes about 15 minutes. I first prepare a nice, hot cup of coffee, then sit down and read... I would recommend that you begin your Bible reading in the Gospel of Luke, and then just keep reading till you finish the whole New Testament (i.e. the book of Revelation).

Truly, my friend, allow God's peace to become something you prize. Sit with the Lord. Pour out your heart to him. And allow his **'peace that passes understanding'**, to bypass *your* understanding – your mind – and settle on your spirit.

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

(Philippians 4:6-7)

Offense is the Best Defense

We ended the last section with a powerful verse about ***'peace that passes understanding.'*** This is something God gives us, pours out on us, when we look to him.

But look at the very next verse:

'Finally... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.' (Philippians 2:8)

We pray to God and he pours out peace on our soul. However, we are also instructed in what to set our minds on. We have to apply *our* 'focus'.

This should not become a heavy burden, or a boring zone. It is about purity, goodness, joy. I mean, look at the range of what Paul is saying, even things that are *'admirable, excellent, praiseworthy.'* These are not all holy things, they are just 'good' things. Right?

Jesus did not want us to isolate from the world. He prayed this explicitly for us:

'My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.' (John 17:15)

Jesus himself moved in very 'secular' circles – i.e. with people who were not believers, often

not even good people. Jesus connected with the world around him, enjoyed their food, their friendship, their communities, their homes. He was not isolated – not in culture or in company.

This should free us! Paul is encouraging us to actively focus our minds on things that are good, not just things that are Christian. Paul himself read books that were not Christian – but they were not dark or unwholesome, either.⁵

So, my friends, try to see and know the difference. There are some computer games, for example, that are fun, adventurous, ‘*excellent*’; there are others that are inappropriate, too violent and bloodthirsty. There are movies that are funny, insightful, challenging, entertaining; there are others that are pornographic.

And our diet of God’s Word, and good, Christian worship music, should be daily. Although we don’t have to be isolated and restricted to only ‘Christian’ material, we do need to discipline our hearts and minds to be focused on goodness, and God’s truth.

‘Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.’ (Romans 12:1-2)

⁵ Acts 17:28; Acts 7:22

My soccer coach as a kid used to say that offense was the best defense. In other words, if and when we were attacking the other goal, well, our own goal was safe. The same is true with our hearts, minds and spiritual life. If and when we are spending time with the Lord, seeking his face, building relationships with other Christians, sharing our faith with other people, we are less vulnerable to temptation and distraction. It is much harder for the enemy to hit a moving target.

Let's talk a little more about sharing Jesus with other people...

Power to Change!

'The kingdom of God is not one of mere talk but of power.' (1 Corinthians 4:20)

When I first started following Jesus, I didn't really think about power to *advance* the kingdom, to take ground. I was more concerned with establishing the 'walls' of my own faith, and being strong inside of Christ. This is OK. But it is only one side of God's power. Yes, he gives us power to establish and protect our faith in Jesus. This is important. But he also gives us power to *advance* his kingdom in the lives of other people, other places, other lands.

Look at this amazing thing that Jesus says to Peter – and says to all of us:

'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

(Matthew 16:19)

Jesus had an outward focus. He saved people, but then gathered them and led them to save others. Jesus was always going from one place to the next, searching for the *'lost sheep'*.⁶ Jesus did not put pressure on his followers to reach out, but rather led them in this. Jesus leads us also. He goes with us. He has, in fact, gone before us:

⁶ Mark 1:35-38; Luke 19:10; Luke 15:1-7

‘Jesus said, ‘When the Holy Spirit comes... he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me...’

(John 15:26-27)

Does the idea of telling others about Jesus make you nervous? Do you feel a little afraid when it comes to sharing your faith with people? Me too!

You know, one of the best ways to see this happen in your life, is to simply put your own faith into practice. What I mean by this is, for example, if you go to church each week, very soon someone will ask what you are doing for the weekend, and you will be able to simply say, *‘Well, nothing much on Saturday this week, but on Sunday I do go to church, so that is on the cards...’* A very natural way to simply share something of your faith. How? Well, by your commitment coming up naturally in conversation.

This goes for any commitment, any day of the week. Maybe you cannot go to church on Sunday, because you work, but you do attend a weekly Bible study or college faith event on Wednesday evening. If you are willing to be honest about this, the Lord will use it to share your faith. Someone will invite you some time to something else on Wednesday, and you will be able to say, *‘Honestly it sounds fun, but I go to a Bible study on Wednesday evening.’*

The Lord may prompt this person that you have 'testified' to, to ask for more information. 'Oh, what church do you go to?'

And pray. Yes, my friend, you have power in Jesus to actually invade people's hearts and minds for Jesus. Look at this amazing verse:

'Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ'

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

I will often lie awake at night and pray. I will pray like this:

Dear Jesus, I think of my neighbor, Josh. Lord, please touch his heart. Jesus, whisper to him tonight. Speak to him, Lord, about his need for forgiveness, and the truth of Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray also for my boss. She needs you, Lord. She is angry, and seems to be hurting. Father, move in her spirit. Lord, soften her heart towards the name and the gospel of Jesus. Lead someone across her path who can speak to her, and share with her about you. Lord, I also pray against the corruption in our own community. Some leaders, Lord, business owners, are using their power for

selfish gain, for violence and corruption. Jesus, I bind them in the name of Jesus. Those men on the news this evening, I bind them in your name, and ask that you bind them in heaven. Call them to account. Weaken their cause. Expose their sin. I pray that you awaken a fear of God in their hearts tonight. Jesus, I wage war against their sin in your name. Stop them, Lord. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

In Jesus you have power to change the hearts and minds of people. You have power to stop evil. Your faith is ***'more precious than gold'***⁷, and you can partner with Jesus to change this world.

You have power to change your own life, and power to change other people's lives.

So we pray, we obey, we make a daily habit of spending time in God's Word and in worship. In other words, my friend, we *walk* with Christ.

⁷ 1 Peter 1:7

Final Words

Jesus is God's treasure. When you see and know Christ, you are standing in an eternal space. The worth of what you hold has no measure!

Jesus himself said,

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.'

(Matthew 13:44)

As you set up camp at college, stake a claim to the territory. You are not a 'foreigner' in that place, who needs to figure out the culture and row in. *No!* You are a citizen of heaven, and your God built the very earth that this college stands on. Your Lord claims it, owns it, and will demand an account from every person at this college for their lives, their faith, their behavior.

'Man is appointed once to die and then comes judgment.' (Hebrews 9:27)

So go into college – or now, whatever year you are in, rise up in college – and take your stand. Stake your claim. Sink your flag down in the ground. You believe in Jesus. You follow him. And you trust that his Word and his promises and his Spirit own this place.

I hope this short booklet has encouraged you, and cast vision for a strong stand, but also equipped you with peace, hope and freedom in Jesus. For more devotionals and videos, etc., please visit www.1peter1three.weebly.com

There is also a dedicated page on this website for 'COLLEGE'.

Thank you for your faith! Thank you for your stand! Thank you, my brother, my sister!

'Pointing to his disciples, Jesus said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.' (Matthew 12:49-50)

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