

# ON CHOOSING A COLLEGE: Issues to Consider

Compiled by the Pastors of Covenant Life Church

## Questions to Ask About Your Child

Is your child spiritually mature enough to face the pressures of college?

- Teaching may be from a secular perspective (evolutionary theory, secular psychology, etc.)
- Possible hostility of non-Christian teachers
- Worldly values of non-Christian classmates

Are you confident that he/she has embraced biblical values?

- Consistency in and passion for the spiritual disciplines
- Attitude of humility/teachability
- Love for God vs. love for the world
- Preference for wise vs. foolish companions

What are your child's motives for attending college?

- Freedom, new friends, athletics, nice campus, high-paying career, "college experience"
- Preparation for life calling
- *"If you don't have the desire to take a college education seriously, you are wasting your time. College is only an opportunity; it guarantees nothing." (Nash/Baldwin, p. 35)*

Does your child have a clear sense of his/her gifts and calling?

- If not, consider delaying for a year and make it a matter of serious prayer
- Should enter college with a sense of purpose/direction, but be flexible

Does our child's calling require that he/she receive a college education?

- Degree shouldn't be the end in itself, but a means to an end (vocation)
- Guys: A college education is usually necessary, unless going into a trade or self-employment
- Girls: If primarily called to be a wife and mom, it's worth considering how necessary a college education really is...
  - Liberal arts education is a benefit to almost anyone (but perhaps a luxury vs. necessity)
  - May need to work for a season before (or after) getting married
  - Note: If you invest lots of money and time in preparing for a career, it might be difficult to gladly embrace the calling of a wife, mother and homemaker
- Specific technical training (e.g. computer repair) may be more advantageous for some

Does your child have unique gifts or a unique call that requires unique training?

Does your child have a high view of the church?

- How has this been demonstrated in his/her commitment to and involvement in this church?
- Critical if considering a college that isn't local

## Questions to Ask About a College

### **Local vs. Distant**

- Is there a compelling reason to leave family, friends, and church to study elsewhere?
  - Need for specialized training
  - Scholarship—evaluate this very carefully (count the cost)
- Has your child demonstrated the maturity and faith that would insure he/she keeps growing in God apart from the support systems of church and family?
- Is there an excellent church near the college your child is considering? Have you visited it? Interviewed the pastor(s) and members?
- Are you prepared for the possibility that your child would not return?
- Compare expense of boarding (distant college) with expense of commuting
- Hint: If specialized training is required, student may pursue general education locally for first two years (while still maturing) and then transfer for final two years.
- Note: While many of us have a sentimental attachment to our alma mater and fond memories of a residential college community, the church community offers a biblical alternative.

### **Christian vs. Secular**

- Carefully research what “Christian” means (not all “evangelical” colleges are)
  - Do the faculty sign a statement of agreement that the Bible is inerrant and infallible?
  - Visit the campus (especially dorms)—is there an evident degree of godliness?
- Secular university can impart knowledge, but not biblical wisdom
  - This is more important in some fields of study than others
    - Very important in education, humanities, social sciences, philosophy, religion
      - Secular instruction conflicts directly with biblical perspective in these fields
    - Less important in computer science, math, music, sciences
- What would your child be more susceptible to?
  - Atheism, agnosticism, cults (common at secular colleges)
  - Hypocrisy, luke-warmness, theological differences (common at Christian colleges)
- Note: Active church involvement can help offset influence of secular education

### **Prestigious vs. Common**

- What’s your motive—need for specialized training or “boastful pride of life”?
- Degree from a prestigious school can open lots of doors (salary and influence)
- Character and gifting will open doors as well, regardless of diploma
  - It’s important to teach our children now that seeking first the kingdom of God is ultimately a higher priority than career advancement
- Will tuition costs put a financial strain on your family?
- Note: A motivated student can typically find all the educational opportunity he or she needs wherever they go

## Resources

- Walking Through the College Planning Process, by Dr. Rick Horne (CLS College Resource Center)
- The Totally Usable Summit Ministries Guide to Choosing a College, by Dr. Ronald Nash and J.F. Baldwin (Summit Ministries, Manitou Springs, CO, 1995)