



SOUTHSIDE

MIDWEEK NEWSLETTER

8.26.20

Dear Parents of Students – Barrett

We spent a wonderful couple of days in Searcy, AR last week celebrating Bailey's transition into college. We all held it together pretty well until we took her to breakfast on the morning of the day we returned to Lexington. Her presence will be missed in our home but she is exactly where she is supposed to be. Karen and I are excited about the plans God has for her. I mentioned in the last newsletter that due to ministering in college churches, I have often been on the receiving end of a student coming to college. Many times, I have shared with parents and their incoming student about the importance of being part of a campus church during their college years. With this being the first time to be on the leaving end, I was reminded of the words I used to share to parents from an email sent to me from another campus minister named Chris Buxton. He does an excellent job of putting into words many of the thoughts I have shared with parents through the years. It was good for me to be the one hearing these words and not the one saying them. I have thought about them a lot this week. Even if you do not have a child in college right now, because Southside is a campus church, please read and consider these words. We have a great opportunity to influence many young people during this formative time in their lives.

Dear parents of college students –

Here are a few words to consider as your child begins their college years.

- 1 Very few students enter college with a fully formed worldview; very few leave college without one. Please allow that to soak in.
- 2 I would argue that choosing a career path, choosing our closest friends, choosing a spouse, and choosing a worldview are the four most crucial decisions of a person's life (faith falls under the category of worldview). For many people, ALL these decisions are made during the college years.
- 3 Because these years will form such a powerful season of direction-setting and transformation, the question isn't whether they will change during college; the question is how and through whom.
- 4 Often, the largest factor determining the kind of person they'll become during this immensely transformative season are their closest friends (this, of course, includes people they date). They should choose very wisely.
- 5 College students naturally seek mentors. Whether a professor, administrator, boss, or campus minister, the worldview of their most influential mentor will often become their worldview as well. Again, they should choose very carefully.
- 6 Whichever group of friends they connect with the first two or three weeks of school will likely be the group they'll be primarily affiliated with for the rest of their time in college.
- 7 If you expect them to live for the Lord during college, then please encourage and assist them in getting active with a strong campus church. This will be THE most important factor regarding whether they live out their faith during college.
- 8 Please do not minimize your influence in their lives. They should absolutely know your moral and ethical expectations for them as college students. If you are ignoring or even empowering them as they sow their wild oats, assuming that's just what college students are going to do, please allow me to humbly suggest that you're making a terrible mistake.
- 9 If you are prepared to ask hard questions and to even take drastic action regarding grades or accommodations, it is important to also be willing to ask hard questions and even intervene regarding their life of faith.
- 10 On the other hand, whenever they encounter a struggle that will naturally arise when they're on their own for the first time, please resist the temptation to swoop in to rescue them. If they're not getting along with a roommate or believe a professor is being unfair, please DO NOT SAVE THEM. Give them tools and suggestions, then force them to deal with it themselves.

Endurance – Kevin

The last endangered quality I want to identify is endurance. Endurance has something to do with finishing strong, stick-to-it-ness, refusing to quit. Giving up, quitting, walking away – those things are so easy to do when life becomes difficult. Fifty years ago Simon and Garfunkel wrote a song which became a classic, The Boxer. This song was a story about a kid who traveled to New York City with dreams, but all of those dreams were shattered and he spent his days “laying low, seeking out the poorer quarters where the ragged people go, looking for places only they would know.”

How does a person get to a place like this? Why do our dreams fade away? What dreams have you given up on? What have you regrettably quit because the journey was just too difficult? In the song the kid is about ready to give up and go home. But then he sees a boxer. “In the clearing stands a boxer and a fighter by his trade and he carries a reminder of every blow that laid him down or cut him till he cried out in his anger and his shame – I am leaving, I am leaving! – but the fighter still remains.”

Would you say endurance is something that’s lacking in your life? I’ve learned a lot about myself through training and running a few marathons. In every marathon I’ve run, during the last three miles or so, the challenge isn’t so much physical as it is emotional. The will to endure to the end must be greater than the pain of quitting. If the will to finish is present, the pain becomes secondary. If the will to finish wanes, pain will be the only thing that matters. I’ve seen a lot of people walking during those last challenging miles.

As followers of Jesus, we have not only a perfect model of endurance (Hebrews 12:1-4), we also are given access to a wealth of staying power (Ephesians 3:14-21). Our lives don’t have to be marked by unresolved conflicts, unfinished business, abandoned dreams and settled for personal character. Instead, may our lives be defined by continuing, pursuing, enduring, finishing. “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive a crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

A Shepherd’s Prayer – Jim

If you want to be happy, stay off social media. There’s a mountain of anecdotal and carefully-developed research data that presses that point. So, what’s the deal?

When I had a Facebook account, I noticed a strong contrast between the “highlight reels” of so many other people and my own, little, boring life. How come they look stunning in their photos and daring in their exploits? Why do they seem to always be victorious even when they admit that mishaps and misfortunes invade their lives? Why am I blue?

Of course, I’ve figured out that what gets posted (by some people) are snapshots of only the best, often inauthentic moments. However, it’s really tempting to compare the unglamorous reality of my life with the fake-glamour of others. If I was prone to despair, there I’d be.

You know, the underlying human instinct to project a positive, but false self-image is nothing new. This is supposition, but it’s not hard to see that in Jesus’ time most believed the healthy, powerful, rich, respected, and educated were clearly favored by God. The logic was simple – if your life looked good it’s because you must be good and God has blessed you for your religious devotion. The opposite was also thought to be true – if your life looked bad, it must be because you were bad and God has cursed you for your sinfulness.

So, then as now, there’s this desire to be perceived as blessed by God and, therefore, to project a positive, but false, public image. The truth about your life is less important than what people think is the truth.

Jesus didn’t play that game. Instead of blessing the one who has a good family and observes the whole Torah and has all the right friends and develops a reputation as righteous, in the Beatitudes, Jesus blesses those whom no one else blessed (overlooked, peaceful, pure, meek, sad, poor). What does that mean for us?

First, it means no one is beyond God’s blessing, even those others call cursed or worthless.

Secondly, Jesus obliterates our tendency to judge others by their circumstances. And the same goes for judging ourselves.

Father, what is it now but your favor that secures me in your love, and gives me inexpressible mercy, pardon, and peace now, and everlasting glory hereafter? Is not your favor better than life? Is it not more precious than rubies? Can there be anything better? In Jesus we pray.