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OUT OF THE NEST AND OFF TO COLLEGE: A Time for Exploration

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Out of the Nest and Off to College: A Time for Exploration

College may be one of the most anticipated times for young Americans and one of the most nostalgic times for American adults. It is often referred to as “a time for exploration.” It’s a time for students to figure out what to do with the rest of their lives; what they like, what they believe is the truth, and who they are. It is the beginning of a young adult’s independence. This can be scary to parents who have raised their children to be good Christians because it is common for children who were raised Christian to go off to college and return atheists or skeptics. Christians believe that truth and one’s true identity is found in Christ, but for college students, there are many roadblocks on this journey. The college party culture and philosophies of atheist professors detour young adults from finding the truth, but love and reason can help guide students back onto the right path.

Distractions of Drugs and Debauchery. In pop culture and media today, college is no longer represented by a scholar with a diploma, but by a frat house with a prescription for glaucoma.¹ The party culture of college is taking over and is distracting many from their search for identity and truth. The problem is simple: drugs and alcohol feel good, and sex feels better. Why should students search for more when these new and exciting things bring them such immediate pleasure?

Sharing Hope. To answer this question, we must remember why we, as Christians, wish for college students to come to Christ and accept Christianity. We ought to evangelize out of love and the example of Jesus. God came down to earth to show us how to live the best life possible through Jesus. It was not out of power, but out of love. It was not to limit our lives, but to better them. Doing what is right is doing what is best. In doing what is best, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, meaning that we want the absolute best for them. In being Christians, we have decided to repent from

our old ways of living and take part in the new and better life that is found in the teaching of Christ. Therefore, if the ways of Christ have bettered our lives, then we ought to share them with the world and hope others will also better their lives by His ways.

Before we look into what we can do to help young people through this phase, we must realize that often there is little that can be said or done to insulate a young adult from the temptations of college life. Yelling about fire and brimstone and damming them to hell will only drive them further away. The sparkle of the party culture will fade away on its own. Just as we have faith in God, we ought to have faith that pleasures pursued contrary to His counsel will fail to sustain the soul.

I often use my own testimony to inspire others to follow Christ. My freshman year, I could have been the poster child for the party culture. However, when many things in my life seemed to be falling apart, I quickly realized how unfulfilling it was. I felt lost and depressed. There is something about depression that makes one poetic and I thought that if I was going through hell then I ought to read about it. Dante's journey through hell, purgatory, and finally paradise in the Divine Comedy exposed me to theology. Just the taste of some truth comforted me and changed my life forever. The natural consequences of sins showed me how I was lost, but it was amazing grace that enabled me to be found.

The party culture, like all sins, leads to a narrow mindset that is satisfied by instant gratification and stunts the growth of the individual. This is not the exploration college is supposed to be. In fact, fear of having to give these things up can keep one from facing the truth about the dangers of these sins. However, these things are very temporal and consequences will come about sooner or later. Once the reality of consequences sets in, with the right guidance, students will be set on the correct path toward their exploration of truth.

Atheist Professors. Once one has seen how temporal and unfulfilling the college party culture is, there is still another major obstacle keeping students from finding the truth. This obstacle is from the atheist professors and their teachings that present Christianity as some kind of fairy tale that holds very little truth and is not supported by logic or reason. An honest exploration of the truth, however, will prove just the opposite, and by knowing the flaws of worldly philosophies, we can help guide our loved ones to the truth.

The Problem of Postmodernism. First, the fact that there is a truth to be searched for must be proven because of the pervasive influence of postmodernism. Postmodernism is a perspective on truth claims that claims that there is no truth! It says that everything is based on perspective. This is similar to the philosophy of George Bernard Shaw, who said, "The golden rule is that there are no golden rules." G. K. Chesterton successfully rebutted Shaw by observing, "That there is no golden rule is itself a golden rule, or rather it is much worse than a golden rule. It is an iron rule; a fetter on the first movement of men." Like Shaw's golden rule, postmodernism "can, indeed, be simply

answered by being turned around.”² It relies on the very thing it is against and is a contradiction. A belief system that seeks to prove itself by using the very thing it most strongly rejects is more detached from reality than most fairy tales.

Once one is ready seriously to explore the truth, without contradictions or distractions, one begins with the evidence that is available in this world: the observations of nature. Science is another popular tool atheist professors use to discredit Christianity. One of the most simple and elementary laws of science, however, is that an object at rest stays at rest until acted upon by an external force. Thomas Aquinas pointed out that in nature movement cannot be traced infinitely backward. He concluded that there must be a first mover, this first mover must be higher than nature to be able to move without an external force, and this first mover is the being we call God. Aquinas also showed that everything seems to be working toward an end—there is a design behind nature. If nature is a design and every design has a designer, there must be a designer of the universe. He concluded that this designer is God.³ It seems that theories, such as the Big Bang and evolution, which are often used to disprove Christianity, are plausible only with a first mover and designer. With science and reason, we do not see that God is a fairy tale, as the atheist professors may suggest, but rather is a necessity.

Ironically enough, we must next come to a famous fairy tale writer, C. S. Lewis, to prove why Christianity (among all religions) is the final destination in the exploration of truth. Lewis pointed out, “First, human beings, all over the earth, have a curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot get rid of it.”⁴ Certain virtues such as courage, generosity, and honesty are not only looked up to all over the world in every culture and religion, but expected. It seems that there is a moral standard of fairness and decent behavior that we all live by. Philosophers have referred to this as “Natural Law.” Lewis observes “secondly that they do not behave in that way.” We know how we ought to act, but we do not. We seem to be fallen from our nature.

Understanding Christian doctrine helps bring all of these found truths together. It explains that God created humans and gave us a moral law to live by, just as He created the universe with its laws of nature. However, we disobeyed Him and became fallen. By going against our nature and sinning, we are faced with the consequences of suffering and death (Gen. 1–3). Therefore, God, not being fallen and of highest morality, loved us and came down to suffer in our place in hopes that we would come to Him and His ways and (dare I say it?) live happily ever after (John 3:16).

An Exhortation to Love, Not Judgment. College is not the end of the exploration of truth, but the beginning. In the beginning of a journey, it seems that there are many different routes to choose from, obstacles to face, and distractions to deal with before reaching the final destination. Any explorer knows that it is easy to get lost without good guidance. That is why Christians that have already found the truth are called to help guide others to it. Like an explorer uses a map or compass, God has supplied us with both love and reason to use for ourselves and to guide others. When a child or a

friend turns away from their faith to partake in the party culture without guilt, then we should not damn or rebuke them, but love them and help them to see why the Christian ways are better. When they are exposed to anti-Christian philosophies that will detour them from the truth, we must use logic and reason to defend our faith (1 Pet. 3:15) and guide them on the right track. Most importantly, we should pray for them. For God's power, reason, and love are far more capable than anything we can do or imagine. —
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Steven Reep is a senior at Palm Beach Atlantic University where he is a ministry major. He plans to get his M.Div. and further his studies of the Christian faith.

NOTES

- 1 Editor's note: This pop culture reference is a good example of the divide between the generations and why we need someone from the younger generation to write about how to reach his peers. Neither this baby boom editor nor his gen X copy editor got the joke. We needed our millennial author to explain to us that he was referencing a prescription for medical marijuana in such a way that it would rhyme with diploma.
- 2 G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2007), 29.
- 3 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981).
- 4 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2009).