



Dear Phil

WASTE A YEAR IN BIBLE COLLEGE?

“Are you sure you want to waste a year at Bible college?”—Mom

The expression on her face was one of worried concern. Her son sat next to me filling out his paperwork to enroll in GBS. She pressed again, “Are you sure this is what you want to do?” He responded confidently, but I could tell she wasn’t convinced.

Statistics say that of the college-age young people in the conservative holiness movement who actually go to college, less than half attend a Bible college anywhere. In the broader holiness movement, the numbers are even less encouraging: under 20% attend Bible college or even denominational schools.

Was the mother sitting in my office right? Is it really a waste for students who don’t plan to be in full-time Christian ministry to spend a year in Bible college? I couldn’t let that question go unanswered in my office, and I’d like to share my answer with you.

Dear Concerned Mom (and Dad):

If you’re like most parents, you really want what’s best for your children. You know that a large percentage of available scholarship monies target fresh-out-of-high-school stu-

dents. You know that the tuition for in-state, public city colleges or universities is significantly cheaper than private colleges or universities. You also know that it takes money to live, and your children will need a good job if they are going to make enough money to live well. You remember the struggles you had getting started, and you’re not sure your children need to cope with that kind of stress on their lives and marriages.

And the local college is, well...local! Why send your children halfway across the country when you can send them just a few miles away and see them regularly? Besides, students who aren’t called into full-time ministry as preachers, teachers, missionaries or musicians don’t need a Bible-college education. Case closed, right? All the Bible-college PR rhetoric aside, it really isn’t necessary, is it?

I can hardly think of a conclusion more tragically misguided or thoroughly unbiblical. This kind of thinking betrays unscriptural values and a massive misunderstanding of the nature of the Christian life and ministry. No, I’m not grandstanding. I’m serious.

If your primary or even secondary concern for your children’s education is that they be able to land a good enough job to make a decent living, you have failed to integrate Matthew 6:33 into your educational philosophy. Jesus wasn’t talking to students preparing for “full-time Christian service” when he said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” He was talking to blue-collar laborers and white-collar financiers and lawyers. Jesus didn’t say, “Once you have your financial house in order so you don’t have to worry about food and clothing, then you should give your time, attention, and support to my Kingdom.” He said just the opposite. “Don’t make a good job and a decent living your first priority. Your first priority must be my kingdom.”

Seeking first the Kingdom of God in your children’s education means giving first priority to their spiritual preparedness to do what God calls every single one of His children to do. Let me ask you, are your college-age children equipped right now to do the following?

- Lead unchurched people to saving faith in Jesus? Are they doing it?
- Provide weekly, spiritual training for new converts so that they move from spiritual immaturity to maturity?
- Defend their faith against the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle pressure of mockery in the secular educational environment?
- Give compelling biblical answers to questions about why they believe abortion is murder; why homosexual behavior and homosexual “marriage” are, without exception, condemned by God; why they dress modestly; why they believe clothing should be gender distinct; why they don’t believe children should be reared by a village rather than a home with a father and a mother?
- Refute the Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons who come to their doorstep rather than just close the door in their faces, and teach others how to do the same?

If you cannot confidently affirm that your children are prepared to lead others to Christ and then disciple them into Christian maturity both doctrinally and practically, then they are not prepared to do the two things that Christ has commanded all believers to do: witness and make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15).

Your children are not adequately prepared to obey Matt. 6:33 if they are not well equipped to defend their faith and refute false teaching. In light of our Lord’s command, there are no grounds for considering a year or two spent gaining these skills a waste. Far from it! It may be one of the few times your child will learn things in college that will matter in eternity.

I hope you won’t take offense from my strong language. It is time, however, for this kind of unscriptural thinking to be exposed for what it is. Oh, and don’t forget how Jesus ends Matt. 6:33, “and all these things will be added unto you.” Your kids will never lack the things they need if they give first priority to the Kingdom of God.

Sincerely,

Philip Brown ■