

We're warned in Ephesians 4:14 to grow in our faith so that "we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching." Alex McFarland is gifted by God with the knowledge, urgency, and clarity needed to help prospective college students prepare for those inevitable waves.

—Mark Mittelberg, International Speaker and Coauthor
of *Becoming a Contagious Christian*

In the pages of this mind-illuminating, heart-piercing, and soul-enlarging book, Alex's infectious passion will give you the holistic resources to stand strong in college. And in your standing strong you will help others stand strong as well.

—Derwin L. Gray, Pastor, Evangelist, Author,
and "Evangelism Linebacker"

If there was ever a time to inoculate students against the anti-Christian viruses that circulate in the rarified air of college campus classrooms, that time is now. McFarland's *Stand Strong* is an effective antidote to a pandemic claiming the spiritual lives of tens of thousands of Christian kids who are leaving the biblical worldview and landing in a wasteland of pseudospirituality.

—Hank Hanegraaff, host of the *Bible Answer Man*
broadcast and author of *The Apocalypse Code*

Stand Strong is not just about surviving the post high school years. It's about having a solid faith that can withstand the intellectual and emotional challenges the world throws at you. I wish every young person would read this and take it to heart.

—Sean McDowell, Author of *ETHIX: Being Bold
in a Whatever World*

While some are discussing why so many teens are falling by the wayside, Alex McFarland takes action. As students face the realities of temptation, deception, and distraction on the university campus, Alex offers practical guidance for staying grounded, growing deeper, and living with purpose and confidence during the college years. *Stand Strong in college* is a gift to a generation at risk.

—Ron Forseth, Vice President, Outreach, Inc.
and General Manager, SermonCentral.com



Alex McFarland

Stand Strong
in college

Stand Strong in college

Copyright © 2007 by Alex McFarland

All rights reserved. International copyright secured.

A Focus on the Family book published by

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

Focus on the Family and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered trademarks of Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995.

TYNDALE and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the *King James Version*. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

People's names and certain details of their stories have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of Focus on the Family.

The appearance of external links does not constitute endorsement by Focus on the Family of the linked Web sites, or the information, products, or services contained therein.

Editor: Marianne Hering

Cover design by Joseph Sapulich

Cover photograph of people © by Eric Skorupa/iStockphoto. All rights reserved.

Cover image treatments © iStockphoto. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McFarland, Alex, 1964-

Stand strong : in college / by Alex McFarland.

p. cm.

"Focus on the Family."

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-1-58997-465-4

ISBN-10: 1-58997-465-4

1. College students—Religious life. I. Title.

BV4531.3.M4195 2007

248.8'34—dc22

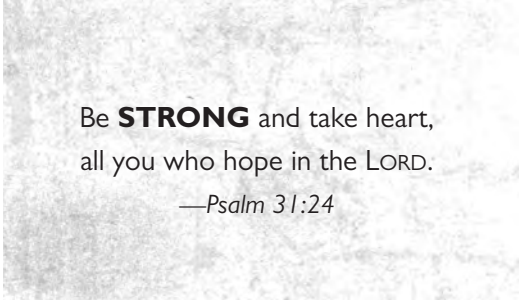
2007017275

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 / 13 12 11 10 09 08 07

*This book is dedicated to peanut butter,
and to my favorite brand, Harris Teeter,
which has nutritiously seen many a student
through college and through life,
myself included.*





Be **STRONG** and take heart,
all you who hope in the LORD.
—*Psalm 31:24*

Contents

Acknowledgments	xiii
Introduction: Call It as God Sees It	1

Part One: A Prepared Heart

Chapter 1: Do You Have What It Takes?	9
Chapter 2: You Are Not Your Own	23
Chapter 3: Emotional Stability	37
Chapter 4: Physical Disciplines	49

Part Two: An Unshakable Faith

Chapter 5: Academic Readiness	71
Chapter 6: Logic, Philosophy, and God	93
Chapter 7: Attacks on Biblical Morality	113
Chapter 8: Disciplines for Your Mind	129

Part Three: A Significant Life

Chapter 9: Ethics	145
Chapter 10: Sexual Purity	155

Chapter 11: Spiritual Adventures 171

Chapter 12: Life After College 181

Appendix I: *Stand Strong* Answers 20 Questions 197

Appendix II: Reputable Christian Organizations 219

Appendix III: Apologetics Web Sites 221

Appendix IV: A Suggested Reading List 225

Notes 229

Acknowledgments

Books are not just written, they are built. This project has been dear to my heart for years, and many dedicated people deserve credit for helping me to hammer away at it. *Stand Strong in college* is based on a seminar I have presented in hundreds of churches around the United States, which was originally entitled “*What You’ll Hear Your Freshman Year: Preparing for the Ways College Will Challenge Your Faith.*” I am indebted to a number of people who collaborated to help make this book a reality.

To the wonderful team that is Focus on the Family, I am grateful for Phil Hildebrand, Larry Weeden, Clark Miller, and Glenn Williams. Together, they gave me a precious gift: *opportunity*. Very special thanks go to the greatest editors any writer could have—Marianne Hering and Tom Neven. They are godly, gifted professionals who have taught me much. Other people at Focus on the Family who deserve special mention include Bruce Peppin, Kellie Vaughan, Chris Perez, and everyone at Global Resources, Briargate Media, and the M-group. I thank God for the blessings that come from working with Cheryl Wilhelmi, Bob Smithouser, Christina Loznicka, Lori Vande Griend, Bob Waliszewski, Clay Miller, Whitney Gilman, Laura Neff, and so many more.

Special appreciation goes to Joseph Sapulich at Tyndale for the outstanding cover design.

Gratitude is extended to EPA Award–winning journalist Warren Smith. He helped me write this book, and his contributions cannot be overstated. Also helping were the staff and faculty of Southern Evangelical Seminary and the Veritas Graduate School of Apologetics

(<http://www.ses.edu>). Founder Norman Geisler, Academic Dean Barry Leventhal, Christina Woodside, Ron Jordal, Jason Reed, Cheryl Maddox, Kathy Njoya, Robert Kornegay, Lanny Wilson, Michelle Hitzelberger, Scott Matchez, Brandon Dahm, Marcia Montenegro, Bill Roach, Chris Tweedt, and Ted Wright all deserve special mention.

Several key friends in ministry deserve special acknowledgment. These include: Broadcaster and author Danny Fontana, and engineers Casey Shannon and Bo Thompson. Thanks, guys, for graciously allowing me to use your *iLife* studios each Friday afternoon and for staying after hours just so I could broadcast *Truth Talk Live*. Special thanks also go out to Stu Epperson, Jr., my friend of many years and founder of *Truth Broadcasting*.

I am also very grateful for Ron Shuping, Doug Butts, Karen Mathis, and the staff of the Inspiration Television Network. Thank you for having the vision to reach teens with the biblical worldview, and thank you for giving me a platform as host of *Take a Stand*.

Two awesome brothers who have shaped my life in a number of ways are Lee Strobel and Mark Mittelberg. I thank the Lord for you both.

I praise God for my wife, Angie, who has prayed for me, helped me, and driven me to and from the airport at crazy hours of the day. In addition to being a nurse, she often helped to look after my parents while I was away speaking. Thank you, Angie.

I am thankful to Jesus Christ for saving me, and for the Bible, which for 22 years has been an ever-present friend.

Finally, I acknowledge and applaud the Christians present on college campuses everywhere: the professors, staff, and students who choose to stand strong.

Introduction

Call It as God Sees It

It's weird. By the end of my senior year in high school, I just felt like

I had so outgrown my church's student ministry, and I was practically dying to move on. College threw me a lot of challenges that I wasn't really expecting, and I had been probably one of the strongest Christians in my whole youth group. Now I think about how I could have been a lot more focused on the Lord while I had the time, and while I was pretty much surrounded by adults who cared about my spiritual growth. I feel like most everybody on campus would just as soon we Christians all become atheists.

—Kyle T., Texas

In the Broadway smash hit *Guys and Dolls*, gamblers Nathan Detroit and Sky Masterson made their living by holding illegal gambling games. Over the years, they won and lost thousands upon thousands of dollars rolling dice. During one gambling session, a fellow hoodlum objected to Nathan's specially made dice: "May I have a look at them? These dice ain't got no spots on 'em! They're blank!"

Nathan reassures the fellow con he need not worry: "I had the spots removed," he says. "But I remember where the spots formerly were."

It's no surprise the blank dice always end up rolling in Nathan's favor.¹

This illustration has parallels to real life—a more serious “game” with higher stakes than anything money can buy. Today many people have decided life is a game of “Call It as You See It.” The goal is to fight your way ahead, make up the rules as you go, and change them when needed.

Judges 21:25 confirms that even in ancient times, people were prone to doing what was right in their own eyes. That philosophy is as spiritually empty now as it was then. During your college years and on, you will have to decide if you are going to live by the world's rules, which are really no rules at all, or if you are going to live according to God's truth. Are you going to pursue conformity or character? Conventions or convenience?

Good-bye High School, Hello World

This book is for those who want to learn to call life as God sees it.

This book is for you if you are in college and you now know that if you are going to get the most out of your college experience you have only a few years left to take control. Perhaps you are a high school junior or senior, or you've just graduated from high school, and you're looking at college with both excitement and anxiety. This book can help set you on the right course.

Stand Strong in college is not your normal get-ready-for-college book. It's not designed to help you with your applications, references, SATs, ACTs, or your application essay—at least not directly. Rather, the purpose of this book is to convince you that you can and should determine today what your college experience will look like tomorrow. The choices you make now and in the near future will have an impact on the rest of your life.

One of my professors in grad school, Dr. E. L. Towns, used to say, “You are purchasing your tomorrows today.” The passage of time is so subtle that most of us barely notice this truth. Morphing from youth-grouper to successful college student to adult disciple is a challenge, yet believers must be good stewards of both their present and future. I hope and pray this book will help you realize that the time to invest in all that God intends you to be is *now*.

A term that has become popular in recent years when speaking about successful transitioning through college, moving into a career, and reaching maturity as a young adult is “preparing to launch.” That term is all wrapped up in finances, independence, and worldly achievement. But personal goals and the desire for success must never blind us from the reality that we belong to God. The most important step in truly preparing to launch is to reaffirm your total commitment to Jesus Christ. He controls our destiny because, of course, Jesus is sovereign over our parents and circumstances, too. Psalm 31:15 promises that our “times” are in God’s hands. Don’t bet your life on anything or anyone less trustworthy than the Creator who formed you for His glory and purposes. The goal of this book is to teach you how to live your life by God’s rules, to call it as God sees it.

Part I

A Prepared Heart

My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is
my **stronghold**, my refuge and my savior—from
violent men you save me.

—2 Samuel 22:3

When I began college, I played by my rules.

I chose my school because it was close to home.

I chose my major because I wanted to be a writer (and avoid math).

I chose my friends to have fun.

My heart was mine, and I devoted it to living for the moment, doing everything humanly possible to pack that moment with fun.

At the time, the most important thing to me was music. I just knew one day I would get a big break and get discovered; until then I played guitar in any small-time oldies band that would take me. Before, during, and after our performances, I would drink and drink a lot. Most times I'd end up drunk.

One Friday night in late October, I drank heavily after a gig at a frat party. I passed out, and some of the frat guys threw me in a Dumpster behind an Italian restaurant. Around nine the next morning, I woke to the smell of soured spaghetti. It took a few seconds before I realized where I was. In a few more I realized a Dumpster was where I belonged. I felt like trash. I was treating myself like trash. Why not throw my life away?

About nine months later, I gave my life to Christ. I came back to college with a whole different outlook, purpose, and goal. My Savior had changed my heart forever.

As I began to grow in my faith, one of the strongest feelings in my heart was gratitude to Christ for having kept me alive during the wild, meaningless years. I thought about two of my friends who had died in alcohol-related accidents and knew it could easily have happened to me. Uncertainty about their spiritual condition haunted me. I was extremely grateful to Jesus Christ for being so patient with me as He brought me to Himself. The Lord had changed my heart and began to reorder my priorities. I wanted my life to become a decades-long thank-you note back to Him.

I pray none of you ever wakes up in a garbage Dumpster. But hear this: Anything you do that is not done for Christ has no eternal value—it's garbage whether it comes in the form of a six-figure income, a guy with six-pack abs, or the honor of graduating *magna cum laude*.

I see many teens who claim to be Christians but whose hearts are still in the world. They try to have it both ways; they want acceptance by their secular peers and with Jesus. They tell me they're unfulfilled. They might try changing majors, but what they really need is to let Jesus change their hearts.

Christians, all of our victories or defeats are essentially spiritual in nature. Therefore, the most important college and life preparation of all relates to our eternal relationship with Christ.

That is the heart of the matter, and that is where we begin.

Do You Have What It Takes?

The LORD is the **stronghold** of my life.

—*Psalm 27:1*

I know the Bible says pride is a sin. But I'll confess I was a proud youth pastor when, in 1995, I watched as some of my most dedicated leaders graduated from high school.

They were six of the most outstanding young men and women in our church. And I had poured myself into them during the preceding few years. All six were going off to college. All six had a vital faith in Christ. All six had everything I knew to teach them at that time.

But today these six are adults, and only two of the six are still actively, enthusiastically following the Lord.

What Went Wrong?

Researchers knew what I didn't at the time—even good youth group kids fall away from the church once they reach college age. Consider these statistics:

- Only one out of three evangelical teens say, “The church will play a significant role in my life once I leave home.”¹

- Between 70 and 94 percent of evangelical teens are leaving the traditional church after high school, and very few ever return.²
- Ninety-eight percent of professed born-again youth and adults say, “I believe in Jesus Christ,” but their actions, attitudes, lifestyle, behavioral patterns, and life goals do not reflect New Testament, biblical Christlikeness.³
- Only one-fifth of twentysomethings have maintained a level of spiritual activity consistent with their high school experiences.⁴

A peek behind the statistics

The news was not all bad with my youth group’s first graduating class. In fact, sometimes I tell myself that if I were a major league ball player, I’d probably be an all-star. Two out of six is a .333 batting average! That’s pretty good.

But these are not base hits. These are human lives.

What I’ve learned from my own experience, interviews with college students, and from listening to other youth pastors is this: What happens to students *in the first six months* after they graduate from high school has huge consequences in their lives. The ramifications can affect even the lives of their children.

Yes, during that graduation week of 1995, I was impressed by the spiritual commitment of the students in our group. I was happy about things I saw the Lord doing in their lives. But now I know I should have been a bit less proud and a bit more aggressive in making sure they were ready for the challenging college years that lay ahead.

What went wrong with my kids and what is going wrong in our colleges today? I’ve asked myself that question a thousand times, and I’ve asked hundreds of youth pastors and thousands of teens that same question. The answers are as varied as there are people, but there are patterns. No one suddenly wakes up in the morning and announces,

“Today is the day I flush my faith.” Emotional traps can lead teens away from the church more quickly than you’d think. Look around you at the next youth group meeting. Imagine that 80 percent of the seniors in the room will stop going to church within the next four years. Who will go, and who will stay? It’s difficult to predict.

For years I have had the privilege of crisscrossing the country, speaking to teens throughout the nation. In getting to know countless students, I have come to recognize some predictable patterns. I’d like to summarize a few details from the lives of some teens I’ve known along the journey.

Let me introduce you to six EVERYTEENS who will represent good youth group kids. Throughout the book, we’ll watch them during their freshman year in college to see how they fare spiritually, academically, socially, and emotionally. We’ll look at what affects them and how those challenges will change the course of their lives.

EVERYTEEN Adam is a natural leader, because he is handsome and athletic, youth pastors love to have Adam in a youth group. Other kids will come just to hang out with him. Not quite talented enough for an athletic scholarship, and not quite brilliant enough for an academic scholarship, he is nonetheless sought after by colleges who love his well-rounded capabilities. Adam has a full scholarship to a Christian university.

EVERYTEEN Cameron is the most intellectually gifted of the group. He is the valedictorian of one of the largest high schools in his state. He is off to a major university in Indiana and wants to study law. Voted “most likely to go into politics” by his senior class, Cameron can articulate the tenets of the faith almost as well as his pastor.

EVERYTEEN David is your average kid. He does well in math and science classes, but also enjoys reading literature. He was a regular at youth group, helping with the worship band setup and take-down. He’s going to a state college, where he will study accounting.

EVERYTEEN Erin is a new Christian. She began coming to youth group at Christmastime when a girl from the swim team invited her. She is going to a division one school on a partial water polo scholarship. Her parents are hoping she'll outgrow her newfound friends and crazy ideas at college.

EVERYTEEN Joel recently found out the roommate assigned to him is a Mormon. That's okay with him, because the roommate describes himself as quiet and studious. Perfect. Joel didn't party in high school and is entering a small liberal arts college with the goal of avoiding that whole scene. He has already contacted the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and has the phone numbers of two student leaders.

EVERYTEEN Megan, like Adam, has great leadership potential. She is the salutatorian of her large senior class and has been accepted at several colleges, including a couple of schools rated among the top 300 in the country. At high school, she has many friends. She is that smart girl, the outspoken Christian, the student-council leader who somehow manages to avoid the "geek" label.

What's in Your Spiritual Bank Account?

You wouldn't be reading this book if you weren't serious about your spiritual growth and want to make the most of your college experience. You can probably tell that I am passionate about teens going deep with the Lord and becoming everything that God intends.

You may be more ready for college than you realize. A lot of people have been investing in you since you were born—you didn't get where you are today all by yourself. Additionally, God has given you spiritual resources and He expects you to use them. Let's call both of those things "spiritual capital." Let's compare such spiritual capital to the accumulation of wealth and becoming financially secure. A popular television commercial for a credit card asks the question,

“What’s in your wallet?” The advertiser suggests that with its card, you’ll have the buying power you need to meet the expenses of life, and you’ll have protection against high interest rates.

I’m certainly not advocating that brand of credit card or, for that matter, credit cards of any kind. But I do like the question: “What’s in your wallet?” As you prepare to go off to college, what do you have tucked away, so to speak, to see you through the challenges that life will have for you in the years ahead?

I believed I had sent my students off to college with what they needed. I’ve discovered you’ll need resources in four important areas if you are to withstand the challenges you will encounter in college and beyond. Those four are academic, social, emotional, and spiritual. These areas are so important that I will devote an entire chapter to each. For right now, a quick overview will do.

Academic Challenges. Most people who lose their faith during college usually don’t reject Christianity because they were unprepared for academic rigor. So while the academic indicators are important

Overheard in the Student Lounge

Don’t think that you can necessarily lean on the thing that made you strong in high school. Unless it was the Lord, of course. I mean, in high school some people were good at sports, or they were superpopular, or their parents were always helping them out. That’s okay, but remember those things won’t be there. Or at least not as easily accessible. You have to become self-reliant and God-reliant.

—Anonymous, Liberty University, Virginia

Alex on His Soapbox

Dorothy was right. “There’s no place like home.” A recent study took a scientific look at the homesickness experienced by teens once they move out.

“Leaving home is a universal developmental milestone,” said the January 2007 issue of *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. This study documented that 95 percent of young people become homesick once they leave for college. A few (about 1 in 14) will suffer acute, debilitating homesickness that seriously impairs their ability to function.

Larkin was the only girl in a family with three brothers. “In our house growing up, having your own ‘space’ or time alone was pretty rare,” she says. By her senior year, Larkin was excited at the prospect of leaving for a college campus hundreds of miles away. But settling in to her freshman year, Larkin was surprised at the intensity of her homesickness. “I made friends fairly easily, and I got to know a lot of people on a superficial level,” she says. “More than once I cried and prayed myself to sleep because of loneliness. Being away from my family and surroundings was not as great as I thought it would be.”

There is nothing wrong with admitting you’re homesick and lonely; such emotions are part of being human. Recognizing the near universality of homesickness (95 percent) is all the more reason to be intentional about reaching out to others, making friends on campus, finding fellow Christians, and getting plugged in to a church. Seek someone who needs encouragement—you’ll end up being encouraged, too.⁵

and shouldn't be neglected, other reasons should compel you to do well in college, such as gaining character and wisdom. When you study hard, you are not only learning the subject, you are learning discipline. If you develop those skills early, you will find yourself well prepared to face the intellectual challenges of life after college.

Social Challenges. There's something about being a senior in high school. Even if you go to a big high school or you're not particularly popular or well-known, just being a senior confers a certain status. You're a big fish in a small pond. But college is different. You're back to being a freshman. It's likely that the college you attend will be many times larger than your high school. You may see some of your classmates only once a week. How do you develop friendships in this environment? While you are away from family and longtime friends, who will really be there when you're lonely or just need to talk? Where will you find trustworthy people?

Emotional Challenges. When things go well, it's not hard to deal with life, to remain upbeat and positive. But what happens when social and academic challenges of college get the better of you? And, trust me, they get the better of us all from time to time.

Part of emotional health is being able to maintain an emotional even keel during the storms of life and avoid making decisions that are motivated by fear or desperation. In the King James Version of the Bible, Colossians 2:10 says that the believer is "complete" in Christ. That's how we are in Christ—full and complete. We may not always *feel* that way, and circumstances can certainly conspire to make us feel like a loser. But don't cave in to those emotions, because if you forget about your blessed standing in Christ, it may lead to less-than-ideal decision-making.

Spiritual Challenges. As important and challenging as these other three areas are, they rate a distant second, third, and fourth to the challenges you will face in your spiritual life. It sounds a bit odd to say it this way, but the worst academic or social decision you make might affect your life for years, or decades, or even your whole life. But when you die, that will be the end of it. The spiritual choices you make will affect you for all eternity.

A secular college can be a dangerous place for the unprepared because it is full of people who pride themselves in offering spiritual challenges to other people. It is a place where destroying someone's Christian faith is considered a virtue.

Count on this: Your faith will be challenged. Your mission—our mission together during the course of this book—will be to give you the tools to help you fight that challenge and emerge victorious.

Preparing Your Heart

I told you that two of my six were still following the Lord, and that's so. My point is not that some people are bailing on their commitment to the Lord. That happens in every generation. The real news is you don't have to be one of them. A consistent Christian walk through college and into adulthood can happen for you. God promised to never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus overcame the tribulations of this world (John 16:33), and He promised that nothing could separate believers from His protective care (John 10:28). Let's look at what God will give you to prepare your heart for the college experience.

Your family

God can use whatever type of family you have as a foundation for a successful college life. If your family is able to support you financially,

emotionally, or spiritually then rejoice and use those resources wisely and thank God for them. If your family doesn't offer you that kind of support, don't despair. You can learn early to trust God for your needs, and your faith will be built up. He is able to supply all of your needs beyond what you can ask or even imagine (Philippians 4:19; Ephesians 3:20).

Your educational background

As you prepare for college, you may have some insecurity about whether you can hack it at this next, much more advanced level. That's understandable. But let me remind you that for all kinds of reasons, from financial to a concern for their reputations, colleges are not to the business of seeing their students fail. If you have been accepted to a college, someone there—and probably many someones—believes that you can succeed and be a positive representative of that institution for

A Word from the Faculty

Maintain close relationships with your parents, treating them as advisors whose counsel you respect (even if they aren't Christians). Be committed to church involvement before you go to college and once you get there. Don't switch from church to church. Don't miss a Sunday if you can at all help it. Volunteer to minister in your church in some way, join a small group Bible study of some kind. These things will keep you committed and accountable.

—Anonymous, professor of philosophy at
a public university in the Midwest

years to come. They believe you have what it takes—whether you believe it or not!

God's Word

The Bible is a rich source of wisdom and practical knowledge. It is also the Word of God. By daily listening to what God's Word is saying to us, the world slowly, inevitably starts to make more sense. Life's challenges, though new and seemingly overwhelming, are neither surprising nor overwhelming to God.

Other Christians

You are not alone. Just as God is at work in your life, He is also at work in the lives of others. Some college campuses can be difficult places for Christians—incredibly difficult places. Once I led my youth group in an outreach event near a college that had originally been founded by a Christian. The history of this particular century-old college was entrenched in church work, and the denomination that had birthed this school still had a presence on campus. Sounds great, right? Imagine our shock when we learned that there was a “clothing optional” dorm on this formerly religious campus!

We learned about this in talking with some concerned Christian students who were faithfully representing Christ on their campus. Yes, “clothing optional” turned out to mean exactly what we thought. Yes, comparisons to Sodom and Gomorrah did come up in conversation! No, none of our ministry team went in!

But even in such extreme environments, I have yet to run across even the most secular campus where there were not dedicated, godly Christians who are serious about their spiritual health and the spiritual health of others. Seek them out, and you can be sure they will be happy to have you in their fellowship.

The Holy Spirit

Every Christian believer has the Holy Spirit living in him or her. Think about that! The God who spoke the universe into existence, who overcame death, who performed all manner of miracles—that very God lives in you. Now, I want to be clear that the Holy Spirit is

By the Book

Blessed is the man
 who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or stand in the way of sinners
 or sit in the seat of mockers.
 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.
 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither.
 Whatever he does prospers.

—*Psalm 1:1-3*



Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.

—*William Butler Yeats, Irish Nobel-Prize-winning
 playwright and poet (1865–1939)*⁶



If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

—*James 1:5*

not some sort of cosmic errand boy who will do what you want Him to do. No, just the opposite. The Holy Spirit's role is to give you the power to do what God wants you to do. But the good news is that as you mature, your will and God's will become more and more aligned, and the power of the Holy Spirit will be even more real to you.

The example of Jesus

It's a huge comfort to me to look at the life of Jesus and know that He faced all of the challenges I have ever faced, or will ever face, and He emerged victorious. The question "What Would Jesus Do?" has been overused, but the reason is because it's a good one. When I face a difficult situation, I often ask myself that question. It often gives me the courage to make the right choice here and now.

The Most Significant Investment of All . . . Your Life

Have you ever heard of a CD or a mutual fund? Advertisements for such financial products often include someone asking a broker, "What's my expected ROI?" The "ROI," your "return on investment," is obviously an important consideration. As you set goals, make plans, and daily purchase your tomorrows, remember that the greatest returns will come from investments you've made with God.

To carry the investment analogy even further, we may legitimately raise the issue of "risks." There will be physical, academic, emotional, and spiritual challenges during your college years and afterward. But if you take an honest spiritual inventory, you'll probably discover that you have tremendous resources at your disposal. In the pages ahead we'll examine them in more depth, because my goal is not merely for you to survive, but to thrive and be victorious during your college years.

So, back to the question of that credit card commercial: What's in your wallet? The answer is a lot, more than enough to meet the challenges before you. But before we strategize about wisely investing your spiritual capital, I want to make sure you understand a few key ideas—even if you forget everything else in this book.

So turn the page and I'll tell you what they are!

Stand Strong **Answers 20** **Questions**

Questions About God

Q1. Can anyone really be sure that God exists?

From the first verse in Genesis and throughout the Bible, the presence of God is deemed a given. The Bible never tries to defend or explain His existence. In fact, Scripture calls anyone who doesn't believe in God a fool (Psalm 14:1). Ouch!

Some people, however, do not accept God's presence as an unquestionable fact and yet are still seeking Him earnestly. There is a difference between foolishness and honest doubt. When addressing concerns about God's existence, begin by offering loving reassurance that belief in God is reasonable and logical.

God is knowable, because He wants to be. He has shown the world that He exists through creation, conscience, Scripture, and the Savior. (Just remember C.C.S.S.). Creation cries out for a Creator (Acts 17:16-34). The moral law written on our conscience cries out that there is a Lawgiver (Romans 2:11-16). The content of Scripture and the life of our Savior can be explained only in terms of divine origin (see questions 6 and 10 for further explanations). In other words, the evidence for God is there. While God invites us to come to Him in faith, belief is a completely rational position to embrace.

The issue is logical but also transcends mere intellectualism; humans are offered a life-changing relationship with God Himself. That's where God has revealed Himself most completely of all—in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Q2. Why does God allow evil and suffering in the world?

God does not directly cause evil actions or suffering. God may *allow* such things to occur, but Christians do not blame Him for *causing* them.

Yes, God has allowed pain to exist in this world, and yet because He is all-loving, He must have good and just—morally sufficient—reasons for allowing such suffering. God has a plan and is working toward some greater good. Given a particular instance of pain (a teen died in a car crash; arsonists burned down the inner-city hospital) we cannot always discern that any good will result. We don't know everything that God does, but we can trust that a great good will result.

If we accept that God is all-powerful (divine omnipotence), that God has all knowledge (divine omniscience), and that God is all good (omni-benevolence), we may be justified in trusting that God has sufficient reason for the pain He allows His creation to endure.

God is no stranger to pain; evil grieves Him, too (Genesis 6:5-7; Isaiah 63:10). Before He went to the cross, Jesus was sorrowful “to the point of death” (Mark 14:34). Jesus endured incredible suffering on the cross for our good. God's mercy, love, and comfort are available to those who ask for His help (Psalm 23:4; 119:50; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

Q3. Does the Bible present two Gods—a judgmental Old Testament God and a loving New Testament God?

Throughout the Bible it is clear that there is one God: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4). Jesus

Appendix II

Reputable Christian Organizations

Athletes in Action	www.aia.com
Campus Crusade for Christ	www.ccci.org
Campus Outreach	www.campusoutreach.org
Fellowship of Christian Athletes	www.fca.org
International Students, Inc.	www.isionline.org
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	www.intervarsity.org
Navigators	www.navigators.org
Reformed University Fellowship	www.ruf.org
Worldwide Discipleship Association	www.disciplebuilding.org

Apologetics Web Sites

These are the best Web sites I know, but this list is by no means exhaustive. And, inclusion in this appendix doesn't mean that I agree with or endorse everything that you might find within these pages or on one of their links.

General Apologetics

www.4truth.net
www.allaboutgod.com
www.ankerberg.com
www.answering-islam.org
www.apologetics.com
www.apologeticsindex.org
www.beyondbelief.com
www.carm.org
www.christiananswers.net
www.christian-thinktank.com
www.designinference.com
www.equip.org
www.impactapologetics.com
www.josh.org
www.leestrobels.com

www.normangeisler.com

www.paulcopan.com

www.peterkreeft.com

www.rzim.org

www.str.org

www.tektonics.org

www.watchman.org

Ancient sources referencing Christianity

www.earlychristianwritings.com

www.ntcanon.org

www.scriptures.com

Atheism

www.answeringinfidels.com

www.ex-atheist.com

Biblical inerrancy

www.inerrancy.com

College student, teen outreach

www.boundless.org (excellent collection of articles, sponsored by
Focus on the Family)

www.trueU.org (awesome place to discover truth)

Creation and Evolution

www.answersingenesis.org

www.creationscience.com

www.icr.org

www.answersingenesis.org/Home/Area/bios/default.asp (Ever wondered if any scientists believe the book of Genesis?)

Cults

www.canauserworld.com (Web site of apologist Marcia Montenegro, a former wiccan)

www.christiananswers.net

www.ronrhodes.org

www.watchman.org

Resurrection of Christ

www.garyhabermas.com

www.risenjesus.com

A Suggested Reading List

Christians should read a lot. Drawing water from many wells will keep you from getting intellectually stagnant. Thomas Aquinas said, “Beware of the man of one book.”¹ Of course, the Christian’s number one read is the Bible. The claims of all other books must be measured against the content of God’s written word. Or, as they say down South, “Learn how to eat the chicken and spit out the bones.”

Old Guys but Good Guys

Confessions by Saint Augustine (Hendrickson Publishers, 2005). This book is often considered the “first spiritual autobiography” in Western literature.

Saint Thomas Aquinas by G. K. Chesterton (Doubleday, 2001). An inspiring account of the life of Aquinas, who taught that reason can be trusted.

Apologetics / Biblical Worldview

Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics by Norman L. Geisler, (Baker, 1999).

Fatal Flaws: What the Evolutionists Don’t Want You to Know by Hank Hanegraaff (Nelson, 2003).

Handbook of Christian Apologetics by Peter Kreeft and Ron K. Tacelli (InterVarsity Press, 1994). Also recommended, condensed version of this excellent book, titled *Pocket Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (2003).

Stand: Core Truths You Must Know for an Unshakable Faith by Alex McFarland (Focus on the Family/Tyndale, 2005).

The Bible Answer Book for Students by Hank Hanegraaff (Nashville: Nelson, 2007).

The Case for a Creator by Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 2005).

The Case for Faith—Student Edition by Lee Strobel with Jean Vogel (Zondervan, 2002).

The Case for the Real Jesus by Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 2007).

The Consequences of Ideas by R. C. Sproul (Crossway, 2000).

The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ by Gary R. Habermas (College Press, 1996).

The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell (Nelson, 1999).

The Pilgrim's Regress by C. S. Lewis (Eerdmans, 1992).

The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity by Alex McFarland (Regal, 2007).

The Universe Next Door by James W. Sire (InterVarsity, 2004).

The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success by Rodney Stark (Random House, 2006).

True for You, but Not for Me by Paul Copan (Bethany, 1998).

Christian Living

Becoming a Contagious Christian by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg (Zondervan, 1996).

Destination Unknown: A Guide to Discovering God's Will by Gordon S. Jackson (NavPress, 2004).

- Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians* edited by Kelly Monroe Kullberg (InterVarsity, 2007).
- Morning and Evening Devotions: Based on the New International Version* by Charles H. Spurgeon (Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).
- Smart Sex: Finding Life-Long Love in a Hook-up World* by Jennifer Roback Morse (Spence Publishing, 2005).
- The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work* by Lee Hardy (Eerdmans, 1990).
- University of Destruction: Your Game Plan for Spiritual Victory on Campus* by David Wheaton (Bethany, 2005).
- Where Was God?* by Erwin O. Lutzer (Tyndale, 2006).
- Wired by God* by Joe White with Larry Weedon (Focus on the Family/Tyndale, 2004).

Great Reads That Can't Be Categorized

- 5 Minute Church Historian* by Rick Cornish (NavPress, 2005).
- Leaving Home* by Garrison Keillor (Penguin Books, 1997).
- The Best Loved Poems of the American People* edited by Hazel Felleman (Doubleday, 1936). This classic collection is still a best-seller.

Notes

Introduction

1. Frank Loesser, *Guys and Dolls* (New York: Music Theatre International, 1978), p. 111.

Chapter 1: Do You Have What It Takes?

1. Barna Research Group, “Life Goals of America’s Teens,” a study commissioned by Josh McDowell Ministry (Ventura, Calif.: The Barna Research Group, 2001), p. 6.
2. Josh McDowell, *The Last Christian Generation* (Holiday, Fla.: Green Key Books, 2006), p. 13.
3. George Barna, *Think Like Jesus* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Baker Books, 2003), p. 26.
4. The Barna Group, “Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years,” September 11, 2006, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=245>.
5. Associated Press, “Report Flags Acute Homesickness,” *Charlotte (NC) Observer*, January 2, 2007.
6. BrainyQuote.com, “William Butler Yeats Quotes,” <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/w/williambut101244.html>.

Chapter 12: Life After College

1. IMDb, “Chariots of Fire,” <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082158>.
2. BrainyQuote.com, “Helen Keller Quotes,” http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/h/helen_keller.html.
3. BrainyQuote.com, “Abraham Lincoln Quotes,” <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/abrahamlin163082.html>.

Appendix I: Stand Strong Answers 20 Questions

1. William Dembski and James M. Kushiner, eds., *Signs of Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2001), p. 108.
2. Ibid.
3. Geoffrey Simmons, *What Darwin Didn't Know* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 2004), pp. 52-53.
4. Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Norton, 1992), p. 118.
5. Fred Hoyle, *The Intelligent Universe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), p. 12.
6. N. Takahata, “A Genetic Perspective on the Origin and History of Humans,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, Annual Review, 26 (1995): pp. 343-372.
7. Whitey Hagadorn, quoted in Thomas Hayden, “A Theory Evolves,” *U.S. News and World Report*, July 29, 2002, p. 45.

Appendix IV: Suggested Reading List

1. ThinkExist.com, “Saint Thomas Aquinas quotes,” http://thinkexist.com/quotation/beware_the_man_of_one_book/12058.html.