

Make the Most of Your Winter Break

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Many students will return home from college after finals week and will have a few weeks off of school. Some students may go to previous employments to work for the break. Others will not work for the few weeks that they're home and will choose, rather, to relax and spend time with family and friends. It is my goal in this brief essay to strongly plead with you, precious young men and women, to not squander these days but rather to use them wisely and make the most of your winter break. I want to provide for you six loving exhortations for you to seriously consider.

1. Read your Bible

Either you will proactively resolve to read your Bible or you will not determine to do so with the result that it probably will get left on the shelf without finding the place of priority in your schedule. Young people, remember that nothing in all of the world so profits your soul and satisfies your heart than the precious words of the living God as revealed in Holy Scripture. If there is one thing to diligently invest your time in this break, do *not* let it be video games, movies, sleeping in, laziness, or immorality. Rather, resolve now to devote yourself to the reading of your Bible and persevere in this happy duty. Read the Bible and let God speak to your heart through His truth. It will change you. It will comfort you. It will reprove you. It will bless you. It will guide you. It will strengthen you. Spend your winter break reading your Bible! Plan now to read a handful of chapters each day. Even do this in both the Old and the New Testaments. It's worth it. You can *make* the time. Prioritize it. Love it. Invest in it. Believe it. Hope in it. Plan for it.

2. Discipline your body

Control and master your body. It belongs to God anyway. And He has given it to you to use for His glory. So make sure that you discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness over this winter break. Don't let one day pass without buffeting your body and making it your slave. Don't be mastered by it; you must endeavor to master it! Serve Christ with your body. Rise early and awaken the dawn with prayer and Scripture reading. Live every hour to God's glory. It's all a gift from Him and should be used for His purposes and for His service! Bodily discipline has little profit but godliness is profitable for all things because it holds promise not only for this temporal life but also for the eternal one to come! So, precious young people: discipline your body! Master it! Use it for Christ's glory! Let all that you do with your body, everywhere your body goes, and all that the eyes of your body look at, and all that the hands of your body touch, let it all be disciplined for the glory of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, and for the fame of God's Name! Resolve to live with discipline this winter break!

3. Pray with earnestness

Whatever you do, pray! Young people nothing that you can do would so benefit your soul, shake the world, and impact the kingdom of God more than you praying to the Lord of heaven and earth with earnestness, with persistence, with belief, and with expectancy. Down to your knees. Get out of bed early! Stay up late with your Bible open instead of the TV before you. Call upon your beloved Bridegroom. As He speaks to you through His written word, respond to Him with verbal cries! Worship Him! Praise Him! Adore Him! Ponder His attributes! Confess your sin! Repent of your daily sins! Thank Him for your family! Thank Him for daily provisions! Ask Him for more strength, energy, grace, joy, and power! Pray much this winter break!

4. Speak of Jesus

Don't let others look down on your youth but set an example for them in *speech*. Speak much and speak often and speak delightfully of your Savior. Lay forth all the ways your Savior has blessed you! Proclaim the wondrous works of the Lord on your behalf! Speak of Jesus to your family, to your siblings, to your coworkers, to folks at the gym, to people in the mall, and to strangers walking down the street. Your Savior was unashamed to speak of you, to live for you, to die for you, and to bear God's holy wrath for you, so you speak much of His great love for you and of His great atonement on your behalf! The gospel spreads as God's people proclaim it. So precious student: proclaim Him who delivered you from hell and drew

you to Himself. Warm your heart with His tender affection for you and then persuasively, passionately and earnestly speak of your wonderful Savior to others! He who wins souls is wise!

5. Serve your church

God's plan revolves around the local church. God has a people that He has chosen who are to do His work for His glory in His way. You would do well to involve yourself in God's plan for this is the centerpoint of God's program. God's glory is manifested through the church. So, during your Christmas break, young person, serve your church. Call your pastors and seek to meet with them (yes, even offer to pay for their cup of coffee) and ask how you can *specifically* pray for them, for the ministry, for their families, and for their own hearts. Get specific, take notes, and ask them how you can serve during your break at home from school. What needs to be done? Who needs to be disciplined? What ministry needs encouragement? What missionaries or families or young mothers or divorcees or single parents need a hand-written letter and a dessert dropped off to them with a smile, an encouraging remark, and a prayer for God's strength? Serve by attending. Serve by arriving early. Serve by preparing for corporate worship. Serve by praying much for the preacher, for the congregation, for the Spirit's anointing on the minister, and for Christ-glorifying fellowship. Ask an older member of the flock to meet with you and share wisdom with you from Scripture. Yes, dear shy college student: *you* take the initiative and *you* pursue an older person to mentor you – even if it's for a few weeks.

6. Love the brethren

As one who has turned from sin and is trusting in Christ alone for eternal life, you are part of the body of Christ and are called by God to serve one another through love. Dear young student, consider for a moment how God loved you. He loved you first, he came to you and initiated love, he loved you even when you didn't deserve it, want it, merit it, and welcome it. He loved you when you were His enemy. He loved you when you didn't respond with kindness. He loved you sacrificially by sending His own Son, the Lord Jesus, to be your substitute and wrath-bearing offering. So love others with that same kind of love that you have received from Christ! He loved you and gave Himself for you. This winter break, make it your ambition to love others in the flock and give of yourself for them. Maybe start small. Pick a couple of people on Sunday and initiate contact with them. Shake their hand. Get to know them. Ask them questions. Then, contact them during the week and encourage them. Ask how you can pray for them. Perhaps see how you can come together and serve *another* person or family in the flock. Love each other, serve each other, sacrifice for each other (time, money, convenience, etc.). Be an intentional and a loving Christfollower this winter break. Serve with great love for Christ! Love His people with the same degree that you have received. Find a person sitting alone on Sunday and invite them to sit with you. Find a younger person and intentionally reach out to them and encourage them. Find an elderly person and ask how you can pray for them for the upcoming week. Love the same way that Christ loved you and you will bless others, be filled with blessing yourself, and glorify Christ as you love the brethren. Maximize your winter break! This won't just magically or automatically happen. But with some intentionality and with some planning and determination, you can glorify Christ and serve His church for the weeks that you're home for Christmas break. The glory of Christ is worth it! The good of the church is worth it! The witness to the lost is worth it! The gospel of grace is worth it! And for the joy of your own soul, make the most of your winter break by thinking through these issues and not letting these precious God-given weeks slip through your hands.