

College students: what do you plan to do this summer?

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For you as Christian students, the summer brings many opportunities to rest, serve the Lord, and prepare for what's to come. For many, endless opportunities exist for you to engage in trivial, worldly, unimportant, and time-consuming activities that do not progress your journey toward heaven. As a pastor, I have a heart for young men and women to maximize their time for the glory of Christ and for the good of their souls. Time passes too quickly to waste even a moment. So in this brief write-up, I as a shepherd-pastor with a great love and concern for college students encourage you to serve Christ and live for eternity during these summer months.

I will provide you with 6 helpful and practical tips.

1. Read.

I know. You've read too much already this school year. But let me encourage you to continue to 'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Pet 3.18) and you do this by plunging yourself deeply and satisfyingly in the living Word of God. Read Scripture -- a lot of Scripture. Make a goal to read books in their entirety in one sitting (such as Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews, Revelation, etc.) to get the big picture. Get a few good books and encourage your heart in biographies such as *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield* by Steven Lawson. You'll want to bless your soul by reading a work by some Puritans such as *The Doctrine of Repentance* by Thomas Watson or *The Godly Man's Picture* by Thomas Watson. Read a chapter a day. Ponder. Meditate. Chew on it. Read. Read well. And let God's Word soak in your soul as He conforms you to Christ.

2. Meditate.

You say, meditate? Yes! But you must understand it properly. This does not mean some sort-of eastern philosophy of *emptying* your mind. The biblical concept of meditation includes the *filling* of your mind with biblical truth, chewing on that topic, pondering it, speaking it over and over to yourself, and then living accordingly as it has permeated your entire being. Pick a topic, say, each week and study it, read on it, ask your pastor for helps/resources on it, and take an hour walk a few times a week and ponder a particular topic (such as regeneration, repentance, heaven, hell, holiness, loving one another). Pray on it from different angles. Apply it to your life specifically. Find a text and a truth and meditate on it repeatedly till God has worked it deep into your soul.

3. Serve.

It's easy to attend church casually. It's easy to sleep in, show up late, leave right when the closing prayer is through, and not talk to anyone. Resist this temptation! Serve Christ and serve Christ's people! Young people: the church needs *you* and you have tons of blessings, energies, and assets to contribute to your local church. So serve! Consider taking other singles out for coffee and getting to know them. Yes, find a widow, and a single parent, and perhaps other students and take them out and have intentional questions prepared (e.g., what has God been showing you from Scripture lately? What have you learned about God and His faithfulness in your life? What trials has God seen you through?). Even offer to take your pastor or some of the elders out for a meal on Sunday (you don't have to pay, don't worry) and get to know them. Thank them for serving. Ask *specifically* how you can help during the summer months. Find a need at the church and jump in. Offer to serve. Be proactive, intentional, deliberate, sacrificial. Young

people, fight the easy narcissistic mentality of our culture to just take and receive and get everything that satisfies “ME”. Refuse this and fight it with vehemence. Serve! Give! Sacrifice! And do it for Christ and for others *at church!*

4. Initiate.

People attend church for a while and then leave quibbling that no one ‘loved them’ or ‘reached out to them.’ Young people, please don’t do this. *You* initiate a conversation with that young lady or that elderly man sitting all alone before or after church. That young person who seems disinterested or unengaged or texting on his cell phone, *you* initiate a conversation with him and ask him how you can pray for him or her. That brand new couple that has come to visit the church and appears to be lost, *you* approach them and offer to help them, serve them, hold a child’s hand while *you* walk with them, and even offer them to sit with you in church. Show them the restrooms, nursery, etc. But, of course, *you* need to *show up early* to church to do this. The point of this? Initiate. Pursue people. Christ invested in people. Let us do the same. He initiated men to disciple. Let us do the same. So, young man or young woman, at home for college, don’t lazily sleep the day away or play video games till you drop, find someone (young or old) and *you* initiate a Bible-reading, discipling relationship with them during the summer. Pray for each other. Indeed, *you* might even wish to make it a goal to approach one person each week and ask how you can pray for them. Be specific. Pray much for them. Intercede for them. Follow up. And this will encourage both them and you! Initiate!

5. Pray.

It’s hard. Quietness is hard. We feel weird at just being still. Nothing in our world trains us to sit still, wait, and be quiet. Except God. God demands that His people cry out to Him and pour out their souls to Him! He longs to meet with you and to commune with you. So young people: prayer is hard but it’s always and ever worth it. Remember: prayer moves the Hand that moves the world! Engage with God in regular, fervent, biblically-driven, and undying prayers. Don’t lose heart. If it’s hard for you to pray. Start today with praying 5 minutes uninterrupted. Then make it 10 minutes in a few days. Then after that make it 20. Soon you’ll be praying 30 minutes. Maybe in a month you make it a goal to pray for 1 hour straight without interruption (yes, no texts, no checking social media). Down to your knees! What to pray for? Start by praying through a psalm a day so you affix your heart to God’s character and glory at the outset (Ps 1, 2, 3, 19, 23, 33, 34, 67, 89, 93, 99, 100, 103, 145, 147-150). Then confess your sin. Surely your reading of Scripture will uncover sin in your heart, mind, words, and life. So repent of it (1 John 1.9). Pray for your church specifically. Pray for leaders, by name. Pray for families (and children!). Pray for missionaries (don’t know where to start? Start with TMAI’s missionaries and pastoral training centers around the world & pray for each one [TMAI.org] or HeartCry Missionary Society [heartcrymissionary.com/mission-updates]). Pray for your friends that are without Christ. Pray for revival. Pray for God’s grace in the preaching and His power in evangelism. Pray for a friend to repent—every day—and see how God provides you with opportunities to speak of His gospel and grace to that person.

6. Encourage.

We all need it. You need it. The Word of God tells believers to encourage one another with *these* words (1 Thess 5.11). And the words that Paul speaks of is the reality that Christ will surely soon-come to take His people home to glory. So, young people, be creative and thoughtful about some ways you can encourage believers that God has put into your life. Start with your pastor. Then move to every shepherd-elder and deacon in your local church. Of course, don’t neglect your own family at home -- father, mother, siblings. Even your close friends need comforts also. Write letters. Make phone calls. Can I even say: drop by for a brief visit (of course, men with men, women with women only to be above reproach and not put yourself in a tempting situation or, perhaps, one that does not appear to be above-reproach). Text a verse to a friend regularly. Call that person you’re discipling and let them know you’re praying for them *today* specifically. Pray for families in need and call them to encourage them. Minister the gospel to the bruised, broken, and downcast. Walk with the suffering through their valleys. Christ will encourage your soul as you strive to encourage others. Hard? Yes! Worth it? Definitely! Get to work. Plan now! Diligently serve your Christ.