

Student Responses for Relevant Article 2012

In Christian colleges I would say that it is being complacent. In non-Christian colleges I would say it would be little support from friends about your faith.

I think apathy is a big challenge to a college student's faith.

I know one of my biggest challenges is time. Quite simply, with classes, clubs, and activities, it's easy to cut God out. When God is just another thing on your to-do list, often, He comes after homework, studying, hanging out with friends, and work. The reality is that when God is something on your to-do list, He rarely gets "done."

Struggling with a legalistic church structure that doesn't explain why they believe what they do and have no biblical back-up for what they believe. Struggling with being in the world but not of it.

The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about challenges that College students face is liberal professors. I think that a lot of college students come to college without being grounded in their faith or their values, and they are too easily swayed by the beliefs and arguments of liberal college professors. If students would come to college better prepared to defend themselves against the different ideas and beliefs out there, the college students would give a better defense of their faith and values, and they would not be so easily swayed. Those are just my thoughts on the subject. I hope that was what you were looking for.

I feel the biggest challenge that many students face their first year of college is wanting to fit in with other students. The main driving force for this is the fear that they will be alone. In result, this makes one do things that they wouldn't normally do to fit in. This is a slippery slope because they will get so caught up in a different identity that they will eventually become that person. This idea comes from the whole "college is a place to start over" where people who may have had a depressing life in high school can form a new identity.

One of the main factors that I have seen in my friends is how they are no longer "under the authority" of their parents and "call their own shots". So because of this, a large number of my friends, due to their lack of making their faith their own throughout their time at home, God stayed at home with their parents and family. Now, at college, they take on the beliefs of their friends and are influenced by them more so now than they are by their parents.

Two of the biggest challenges in my opinion are: 1) The newfound freedom from parental control, and 2) Uncertainty about what others will think about you if you go.

People try to find their identity and worth in what other people think. They make decisions based on what people will think or how they would be seen. They put off other important things to gain approval.

People are worriers. They focus SO much on problems, things that aren't going well, and trash the idea of COMPLETELY resting in God. They've tried "giving God control," but he already has all the control; what he wants is them.

A slow and steady process of backing away. And because they slowly stop pursuing Him, they lose touch with what He's doing in their lives. (What ever happened to delighting oneself in the Lord?)

They have the wrong view of God. Yes, He provides; yes, He comforts; yes, he brings peace and many other

amazing gifts, but they still feel like they don't "get enough out of God." He's not a Redbox where we can pick any quality of God to experience in exchange for prayer, going to church, or helping someone without reward.

First I would think Tuition costs (worry) can drive someone away since raising a family is crucial to a lot of Christian couples. Also, Workloads and sex within non-Christ centered relationships.

I think some ways people's faith gets challenged is:

- 1. Meeting financial needs***
- 2. Unexpected accident, for example death in the family***
- 3. Religion is not fun...I'm going to do what I want, when I want***

I think one of the biggest challenges I faced going to college was really making my faith my own. I went to a Christian high school, and grew up in a Christian home, so it all seemed so normal to me that I would just follow the "Christian" path. I have seen many friends that I went to high school with just completely abandon their faith, and I was in danger of doing the same when I first went to college. You really must make your faith your own in order to live a healthy Christian life. When you are on your own, it can't just be your parents faith anymore.

Other people. People are the most influential thing. Get with the wrong crowd, and your 100% more likely to do something you normally wouldn't do, causing guilt and shame.

1. Friend groups, who you hang out with decides what you do. non-Christian friends tend to lead you away from the faith.
2. The "college experience"
3. The busyness of life gets in the way of going to church and scripture reading.
4. Sins get in the way... (drinking, drugs, sex, pornography.)
5. It takes a conscious effort especially at a secular college to keep your faith and to talk about it... and it's not enough of a priority to do that.
6. Never find or even search for a good church.
7. Peer pressure.
8. Freedom finally! no one is making me go to church!
9. The heart problem that it is not a priority in my life. (in high school I said it was, but it never really was.)
10. Smart educated college profs say that Christianity is irrational. "an opiate for the masses." especially science profs.

Here are some of my thoughts:

- 1. Becoming too busy for God. - Yes, college is full of distractions, and the academic load can be suffocating at times. Consequently, students tend to lose the mindset that their time is totally and completely God's. Class, work, and friends often get priority over service and Biblical study. In comparison to money, God calls us to give of our time to Him, the very Giver of life.***
- 2. Sunday is for sleeping. - Crazy parties dominate the weekends, leaving the majority of college campuses snoozing every Sunday morning. Thus, waking up is incredibly difficult and undesirable, not to mention unpopular. Finding a church and getting involved in it requires motivation and commitment that is often squashed by the appeal of Sunday morning conformity and complacency under the covers.***

Being busy is a huge challenge. There is so much to DO in college, so much to experience, that it becomes overwhelming. And on most campuses, church and God are not a priority of things to do. I think that many

college students who grew up in church are bombarded with so many things that are "better uses of their time" than going to church, having a Bible study, etc.

Along those same lines, many Christian circles imply that without God, life is terrible. No questions asked, no exceptions. But there are a lot of smart and happy people in college who have never thought about God. Because of this, the Christian may say, "Well... maybe God isn't that big of a deal after all."

For me the largest challenge is making sense of intellectual thought that says God can't exist. As in, everything that these people are saying makes sense - even their reasoning for being atheists makes sense, and I can't always figure out why I disagree.

As far as my situation goes, I think one of the challenges that face us students is a lack of a Christian "home away from home". Back home, we have a church full of friendly faces, we may have responsibilities like, running the sound, collecting the offering etc. But at school, we don't really have that, upon coming to school it took me until the last 3 weeks of the semester to find a church in this area that treated me like someone valuable. The bigger, more put together, churches saw me as a "pew warmer" and put me in a pew. This isn't enough for anyone! In my own research, and my experience in my father's ministry, I have found that un-involved people are quick to stop attending church and ultimately, stop participating in their faith. Now that I have purpose in my church, I love going! I know people, I have a church family with mutual caring, and size mentors that know and love me. I am so blessed to have those things to help me in my walk, but unfortunately, I think I might be the only guy with this advantage in my hall. Bottom line, uninvolved people lack care. Uncaring people leave the church.

The problems could be attributed not to the university which they attend, but to their upbringing in the faith and accountability or lack thereof in college. Thus 2 people who go to the same college but have different backgrounds go completely different directions.

- 1. They were not taught any apologetics before college.***
- 2. Their faith was their parent's.***
- 3. Prior to college never truly experienced following Jesus Christ.***
- 4. We're brought up in a weak faith of be nice and go to church once-2x a week, and Jesus will bless you with health and wealth.***
- 5. Faith had never previously been tested while they still had a support structure of church and family.***
- 6. Church is just a religion to them... not a commitment.***

I would say for me when I came to college I didn't have a solid relationship with my parents or with God. I was struggling in my faith. Therefore I got engaged in things that filled the void I felt for a little while, but then left me feeling emptier.

Some things that students probably face is moral relativism. Also, hypocritical messages from the Christian community which cause them to stray. Also depending on the college the complete ease with which sin can be achieved from alcohol, drugs, easy sex, etc.

I would tell them to get solid trusting Christian accountability and get it fast. Preferably from someone older and wiser like a pastor.

One of the most dangerous challenges to a college student's faith is time. "Well, if I skip church, I can get this assignment done in time for tomorrow's class", or "Study for this afternoon's test or do my devotionals?" With today's fast-paced culture, it doesn't take much to take up our time and distract us from what's important. Satan knows that if we are always moving, we will never have time to sit back, be still, and listen to God.

I have noticed that when I take time to prioritize my quiet time/devotionals, the rest of the day is more structured, and everything else falls into place. There actually seems to be more time in the day, with maybe even a little extra for something fun.

The ones that come to mind immediately to me are those related to a college environment. Usually, when a kid goes to college they are out from under their parent's authority, and sometimes they want to run from everything that is related to their parents. Also, in college you hear a lot of different ideas and beliefs. Every professor has their own opinions that they will try to convince you of, and without the support group you had at home it's harder to brush those new ideas off.

I'd say that a lack of consistency in reading the Bible is a big one. Peer pressure is also right up there, but that can go both ways.

Here in particular students who have walked away tell me they are not "allowed" to ask questions or entertain views that their parents/churches disagree with. The more they learn the more they wonder. When I speak with them I try to emphasize that God is not scared or shaken by their doubts...he can handle their questions. Also: doctrines are held on tightly...with an emphasis on being right without love.

Also, we've heard that there is such a heavy level of control in some homes, churches, and CU that it is a culture of fear. And I agree with that in many ways. Yet I try to point out the good and the true and the beautiful.

I think that loneliness can be a big challenge that Christians face when they go to college. They leave behind their family and friends and everything they previously knew. This loneliness can cause one to do whatever it takes to fit in and by conforming to society they will be forced to rethink their beliefs.

Relationships

1. My whole entire life changed-- schedule, support systems, location, work load, everything. It was difficult to figure out where to fit God into my new life. At home, I would do devotions right before bed. At school, I barely have enough energy at the end of the night to climb into the top bunk let alone be engaged in reading God's word and praying.
2. It's easy to put God off because I know he'll always be there. It's the lamest excuse but I find myself using it often.
3. It's hard to go to church on Sunday because it's the one day that I have to sleep in. For a sleep deprived college student, many times sleeping wins. Especially when I tell myself that if I was actually in church I wouldn't be able to focus or pay attention anyways.
4. I'm in charge of myself now and I don't have my parents keeping me accountable for my actions. It's easier to let certain responsibilities like going to church or doing devotions slide.
5. I've been blessed with a great roommate who is actively pursuing a relationship with Christ and goes to church every week with me. She has a car and I go with her. Some weekends when she's gone, I just don't go to church because it's easier to just not go than to find another ride with people I don't know.
6. At Cedarville, I'm being filled with the Truth all day long. Sometimes I use that as an excuse to not do my devotions or work on my own relationship with God.
7. Going back to not going to church, I have chapel 5 times a week and I feel like sometimes I use that to justify the fact that I don't go to church occasionally.

- 1. Hearing differing points of view that have strong arguments for what they believe and against your faith.***
- 2. Not having a support system around to help answer the tough questions.***

Perhaps we have this problem at a Christian college:
 Making our faith a habit to live by instead of making conscious decisions.

I think one of the biggest challenges to faith is the sudden lack of structure. When we're in our parents house they make us go to church, get involved with bible groups and whatnot, but don't always explain why that's so important.

I feel Cedarville addresses this problem in a couple ways, specifically: requiring Chapel attendance, requiring spiritual formation sheets, and promoting church community in bible minor classes. Chapel, though forced, makes us aware of community and gives us a shared, structured, and scheduled time devoted to God. Filling out Spiritual Formation sheets can be annoying, but it forced me to join a discipleship group and be a part of a bible study group through my church. I would have probably put off doing these things for later and then never gotten to it. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the idea and necessity of a church is explained and encouraged in classes. My CL&T class has a discussion about why just chapel wasn't enough and why we're encouraged to join a church regularly, and on a deeper level than just sneaking into one service a week. These structures helped me replace my parents influence when I came out here and had the option to do as I like in many areas I'd never been free to choose in before

I think one of the most challenging things to my faith has been trying to balance faith and school - overall to manage my time wisely. It's hard to juggle a social life, a spiritual life, and an academic career all at once. Especially as a freshman with the added pressure and stress that everything is "new."

I think the most pressing issue on a student's faith is the new responsibility a student has for his own time and money. College is usually the first time a person is truly on his own, and given the freedom to do whatever he sees fit. Many times this is the reason that students try things their parents would not have allowed, and they are more influenced than ever by their friends since they live so close to them. The best way to meet this challenge would be to raise children with a deep understanding of the Bible.

Having previously attended a Big Ten school before transferring to Cedarville, I have some experience with the challenges being on a large public school campus presents to faith.

I noticed that many professors presented new material in a way that would indirectly challenge Christian principles or perhaps the reputation which Christianity held within the students' minds. I did not personally have professors who came out and directly denounced Christianity. The tendency seemed to be more often than not to attempt to undermine faith by chipping away at it slowly under the guise of intellectualism. In an environment where new ideas are constantly being picked up by students and discussed in and out of class, people who hold fast to their faith are quickly identified as stubborn or perhaps intolerant and judgmental.

These factors combined with an atmosphere in which students are eager to exercise their newfound independence makes for a place in which faith can only truly be sustained through a strong community of other student believers in fellowship with each other.

Assuming being raised in a God fearing home, I believe that the single greatest challenge to faith is the removal of the parental authority in the student's life. As Mom and Dad are no longer around to supervise and facilitate their growth, spiritually and physically, the new found freedom that college provides creates in some people the desire to rebel against the rules of home.

My Dad had a roommate whose parents were very strict on the rules of the household. In college, away from the

supervision of his parents, he used his freedom to party, drink, do drugs, and basically cause his life to fall apart at the seams. The new freedom brought about by college is the biggest challenge to one's faith because it can so easily be abused and mistreated.

Here at Cedarville, and possibly other Christian colleges, there is the challenge of not having enough opposition to test the student's faith through fire and trials that strengthen us. We students can get complacent in our "Cedarville Bubble" as no one will speak out against us for loving Christ. Although the stress of opposition is not present in our lives, we tend to forget the most basic parts of our faith, because there is no one to question who we are and why we do what we do. This is, in my opinion, the second greatest challenge to our faith.

Other serious challenges to faith include increased peer pressure to act in ways that do not honor God, an increased sense of apathy towards staying consistent in the Word, increased stress and work levels making the student "too busy" for God, and possible doubt to their faith as the crutch of their parents' instruction is distant and other people challenge what they believe, the last of which is especially prevalent at non-Christ centered colleges.

1. Too busy
2. Not enough accountability with friends
3. Different versions of the Bible. By using different versions in chapel/classes it causes me confusion and frustration because at home everyone used KJV. This is the biggest adjustment I have had to make at Cedarville. It took a lot of humbling and research about other versions to accept versions like NKJV, ESV, and especially NIV.
4. Chapel can be an excuse to not do daily devotions.

Those are the ones I can think of for me that have caused me to struggle with my faith.

After being at Cedarville for 4 years I have felt quite the struggle in staying strong in my faith. This is mainly due to the fact that I find it difficult to make time to do my devotions. I would say that this may be the top struggle for students at a Christian university. When you are surrounded by peers who believe in Christ and have been brought up in a Christian home there doesn't seem to be there is that you have to do to keep your faith strong. But oh was I wrong! The closer graduation gets, the more decisions there are to be made and the more stress overrides every other emotion. Relationships get more serious (another challenge to faith), course work gets more burdensome, and the job search begins. Now, more than ever am I wishing that my relationship with God was solid. Thankfully a friend of mine and I have been sharing the same struggle lately and just last week we came up with a plan to help us grow stronger in our relationship with God. Every night before bed, we text each a reminder to do our devotions. On Thursdays, we meet for a cup of coffee and discuss what God has been teaching us through the week. This routine has been going well so far and I am already enjoying the time I get to spend talking to my Father.

One that I have recently been struggling with is the issue of relationships. Not the kind that you just go recklessly into a relationship and then it ends a few months later, but rather, one that you are really investing time into to become good friends first. But because of the dating mentality at college (Cedarville especially, the pressure is almost unbearable), it makes it very difficult to be great friends before a serious dating relationship. Because there's such pressure, there's never really time to get to a know a person well enough to say you want to date them, because by the time you feel you know them well enough, then someone else has already come along and swept her off her feet. This has really shaken up my faith in a number of areas, but I've also gotten stronger in others. I was shaken because I would pray, and pray, and pray for God to bring along the right girl, but every time I thought I found her, then someone else would ask her to date him before I would even get a chance. I'd really struggle with asking God why did He allow this to happen, or what was wrong with me, and if He cared. I've also

been strengthened, because in the pain of losing that relationship, God has really made His presence known to me, and how much He loves me, especially amidst the pain. I hope this helps you with your article!

Not having parental guidance (out on their own for the first time). Plus added freedoms etc. Peer Pressure -- People view Christianity as "uncool".

I think the biggest challenge is that when we go to college, we are out of our parent's reach. So for example on Sundays, since we are out of our parent's supervision, we don't feel like we need to go to church as much. I mean, this does not apply as much at Cedarville, because we have friends that keeps you accountable. But I feel like if I was at secular college, I would not go to church as much due to so many distractions.

Breaking away from "family rules" and learning to live in community with other believers without a set of standard rules, more of an accountable community.

1. Generational Gaps. Our generation is outrageously estranged from our parents. We have entirely new ways of communicating and understanding social life in the world and our parents who may have good intentions, have difficulty relating to us. I think the biggest problem with this is the inability for them to affirm us as individuals and encourage us (thus many people I know wrestle with depression and identity issues) they also have an inability to minister to our generation at times, and pride on both sides of the generational gap keeps us blaming the other party for the problems. The crazy cultural differences between our generations parents and ourselves is not an easy one to bridge, so i think many are turned off of genuine faith in the Jesus of their uncool parents and walk away once they hit college.

2. Sex culture. Our culture is overwhelmingly driven by sex. As young people it is so difficult to attain the wisdom needed to overcome the temptations thrown our way at a young age and sexual activity and failure at a young age with no one to confide in (especially our estranged parents) destroys many people's lives that I personally know. It has been a struggle for me personally going to a public school through high school. Once one's identity is ruled by a sin they cannot resist and are ashamed of, be it sex or any other sin, it can really destroy them and in the long run turn them away from their faith because their youth groups and church services don't help them overcome the sexually driven culture of today. It is a battle I cannot stress enough. I literally can count on one hand the number of men I know well who have NOT struggled significantly with pornography and masturbation in high school. This dilemma is one that wrecks many's view of the church and when they hit college they are so done with an ineffective and unattractive faith in Jesus that they give way to the sins of the world.

3. Lack of community is big i think. I know many men who never "told" someone what they were going through because it was too shameful and our churches lack people who understand the necessity of confession and healing. Were more churches to facilitate practical, genuine, non-judgmental love towards these issues it would bring healing earlier to many teenagers which would help them be planted in a genuine faith in which to stand as they go to college.

I scribbled these thoughts down very fast. Hopefully they are coherent enough to see what my thoughts really are. I think we need to keep Jesus the center of everything, and as I've thought about it, when people hit college they become free to act out of their character. Much of that character is weak and broken already, thus the great challenges to a students faith cause students to walk away from Christ. The challenges at college are no different than challenges in high school as I have seen them. One merely has freedom to choose how he or she wants to apart from a family structure. I think the real challenges lie in the generational gaps we have and

the sinful media culture of sex that we are faced with on more levels than our parents were probably faced with.

The number one struggle--for me anyway--would be the fact that a lot people around you will not be a Christian and your friends from high school who supported you and encouraged you are all gone most likely. Without encouragement from fellow believers, it would make the walk with Christ so much harder than what it is meant to be. The first thing I would do is search out fellow believers and to cling towards God even more so.

The biggest struggle for me has been finding a home church. After growing up in a Christian home and attending church with my family and being very involved, moving across the country and needing to find somewhere to call my church home was very challenging. For a time there is very little accountability as you separate from your family and friends, and often the stress of trying to find a new church while also meeting many new friends through school is overwhelming. While church is not specifically your faith, the church family you build a relationship with helps boost your faith, and challenges you to stay strong. Lacking this stability while in a very vulnerable stage of life can very easily result in falling away.

Another issue could be a lack of involvement in ministry opportunities. As a college student I have found that I don't have money to give to missions, and I really don't have the time or emotional energy to invest in people's lives outside of my immediate sphere of influence with the people I live with and interact with on a daily basis through school. This results in a "bubble" that really isolates us from the outside world and can either boost our relationship with Christ, or tear us away from Him. The result will really depend upon how intentional we are at getting outside the bubble. Particularly in Christian schools this can be dangerous because we assume that we are doing fine because we hang out with Christians all the time, but we are never really challenged, so our faith may not be taken as seriously as is needed.

In addition to ministry involvement, we also tend to end up limiting our social sphere to only include those we see all the time. In college this means fellow students. In and of itself this is not bad, but we also need an opportunity to learn from those older and more experienced than ourselves in addition to building up and discipling those younger than us. Prior to starting college I was being mentored by several women, and I was running a Bible study with several girls in middle school. This was a great opportunity for me to remain accountable, particularly when the younger girls were observing my actions.

We also leave our families when we go to college, so the immediate mirror of our actions on younger siblings is no longer available, so we may not recognize the potential damage we could do. When a child imitates your words and phrasing, you realize what is acceptable to say and what is not. Meanwhile in college, we are far more likely to just go with the flow and not second-guess ourselves as much.

Opportunities to witness are also important, and in Christian college settings tend to be rare. It takes a lot of deliberation to go out and share your faith with people when you live in a Christian community in the middle of a cornfield. Sharing your faith is one sure way to make it your own, when you are questioned and expected to have an answer you find out very quickly what you believe and how strongly you believe it. When I attended a community college prior to coming to Cedarville I was able to share my testimony nearly every day, and I knew why I believed what I believed. I still do, but I don't have as many opportunities, or the opportunities don't seem as influential because most of the people I interact with already call themselves Christians and have heard far more glamorous testimonies.

There's a few ideas of things that have been challenging for me. It really comes down to being deliberate about our faith which can be very challenging when we're trying to balance new experiences of challenging classes, independence, dorm dynamics, relationship issues, jobs and the responsibility for our own wellbeing all at once.

I struggle with putting all of my focus in my classes because they result in grades. It is difficult to set forth time in building my faith when I have 18 credits that are demanding my attention and result in grades which I have to show to get a job when I graduate.

Challenge: Having to figure out what you (not your parents) believe about God, the world, life, meaning etc. while receiving so many differing opinions and ideas from influences around you.

From a Christian standpoint, I don't think we are receiving the biblical foundation we need growing up to sort through tough issues, as well as feeling like our hard questions aren't being answered.

1.) In the secular environment.

The biggest challenge in a secular environment is that living your faith requires work. Most of us grew up in church, and other christian environments. Schools were relatively neutral (or Christian) and you could get by in being superficial in your faith. When you hit a secular college (and the secular world in general) though, things change fast. You're totally immersed in an environment that is totally non-conducive to being a Christian, and to add to the pressure: professors and students alike are in opposition to what you say. The most intelligent minds on campus are against you and it's easy to start wondering if you're the one who's ignorant. In addition to all the there is instant access to any temptation you might struggle with. Have a problem with pornography? Alcoholism? Sex? drugs? well: they're all available to you without much work. Thankfully to combat the difficulty the christians you find are all very strong because they can't not be in that environment.

2.) in the Christian environment

The biggest challenge in a christian environment is that living your faith is easy. It's what everyone does, it becomes what's normal, and apathy is very easy and very often the follow up. Also I say "living your faith" here very loosely because often times in an environment that is so flooded with Christian influence it's easy to lose touch with what it actually means to be a Christian. I have to say that, unfortunately, I see this very often with my cohorts here at Cedarville. They are filled with knowledge about God and Christianity and the early church and everything in regards to such, but it's turned into such rigor that they have lost touch with the relationship, and their actions don't reflect someone In love with God, they just stay in the comfortable, accessible and friendly Cedarville environment and forget about the rest of the lost world. I even feel the temptation to do such...there's such a strong community here that I am tempted to live easy...but I don't think that's what Jesus would have done.

Again, to combat this there are lots of resources about getting involved in local ministries here, but just like when finding Christians on a secular campus; we have to take the initiative first, they don't come to us.

I think the biggest problem is if the student is going to a Christian univ. Then it's the challenge of taking personal, daily responsibility for one's faith. It's easy to get lost in the bubble when you're constantly surrounded by Scripture, and then when you go home, for example, you're completely lost because suddenly, you aren't floating around in that bubble. You've let other people do the discipline of faith for you. On the other hand, if you were to go to a secular university you face much the same problem but this time without the safety of the bubble. You deteriorate a lot faster. Many students leave home for college and suddenly they're responsible for everything from when/what to eat to when to sleep and if/when they should go to church or do faith-based activities, etc., etc. I'm not sure how to fix it, but I've watched my high school friends fall SO fast in their first year of college and all I could do was weep for them. I too experienced it after my first year of college at CU and by the grace of God

alone did I come out of it. So many aren't so lucky as I have been. Students have to be diligent and purposeful about their faith. Every.Single.Day.

Insecurity and immaturity with my faith upon entering college.

I think the biggest I have seen, both for me and friends is the philosophical challenge of faith. In our society we want to believe in something that there is hard evidence for, something faith can't provide. Last week, I got an instant message from a friend who goes to a secular university who said she was confused about her faith partly due to the challengers her philosophy class raised. It brought up some doubts in me too. Through Cedarville, everything is done with the assumption of God's existence, which makes sense, but we talk so much about how our faith shapes us, how we should live through it, yet I sometimes feel we don't spend enough time learning to defend our faith.

The biggest challenge is freedom. When students get to school they usually don't have parents around to take them to church, and on a Sunday morning there is very little incentive to wake up to go to an unfamiliar church. Students do what they want, and there is little to no accountability, especially in the larger public universities. Other students influence them away from their former convictions (peer pressure) and there are less and less students to influence them positively.

I think to some extent this question is often asked with the underlying assumption that these kids coming out of Christian homes are strong/committed Christians in the first place - with so many broken homes and absent fathers more often than not kids are cultural Christians instead of desperately in love with Christ.

There are many challenges to faith that students go through in college, but they all revolve around leaving a world where most of your beliefs were defined for you to a place where you have to decide for yourself for the first time what you really believe. That being said, here are some of the challenges:

Separation from Family and Friends-- Family and friends are foundational in helping us determine and deliberate what we believe. When these influences are gone, we have little to reinforce what we once believed. The key to preventing this is to find a solid group of friends at college to help students to constructively think through and develop their faith.

Worldly Temptations-- No matter where a student goes to college, there will be the temptation to abandon the faith or the real commitment of the faith for things of the world that seem to be more attractive, pleasing, or satisfying. To prevent this, a student must have a firm foundation in God as the only one who can satisfy our needs, wants, and desires. Without this, a young believer is sure to stray from the path looking for happiness and satisfaction in the wrong places.

Good luck and hope this helps,

I think that students are not challenged to make their parent's faith or their churches faith their own before they come to college. Consequently, when they have doubts because no one else holds similar beliefs, they don't have a personal faith that they have cultivated on which to fall back.

1. A relationship with Christ takes time and effort. Between classes, jobs, and friends, college is an incredibly busy time. If the student doesn't think that the long journey is worth the reward, they simply become apathetic and drift away from their faith.

2. They don't make their faith their own. Before college, students could feed off of their parents' faith, not

actually internalizing what they personally believed. When college hits, the parents are gone, leaving the student with extremely shallow spiritual roots.

3. Peer pressure. Especially at secular schools, pressure to party and to "experience new things" is intense. Students who have difficulties standing up for what they believe in don't last long. After giving in, they see faith as a crutch that prevents them from doing what they want.

4. Professors. A lot of students are intimidated by professors, especially the highly intellectual ones who seem to have all the answers. If a knowledgeable instructor tries to convince the class that there is no God, many people in the class might actually take his side simply because he is a professor (and therefore an expert).

I think these challenges could be met by an increased emphasis on personal faith. Growing up, many people rely on their parents' faith to get them by. A lot of parents seem to be OK with this, not realizing the dangers of "incubating" their child for too long. I'm not sure about how to go about accomplishing this goal, but I think it's a good place to start.

One of the challenges I've faced is coming to grips with the Old & New Testaments, how people will argue that it seems like there is a God of the Old Testament and He is different in the New Testament, how do we reconcile and get a complete picture of God in the whole span of Scripture, because often we focus on the New Testament. Also, why is God so evident in the Old Testament with His people, but doesn't appear to be doing such things with his church today?

I would attribute that statistic to the type of Gospel modern evangelism preaches. The Gospel message that most college students have responded to is a message of health, wealth, prosperity, and everlasting happiness. More or less, modern evangelism focuses on a better life for those who come to Christ. This produces backsliders in bulk when they face trials and suffering, because they have not received what they have been promised. But I'm sure you know all about this practice.

The reason for the timing of their falling away from the faith would be that many students face great hardships in the first years of college. They are away from home for the first time. Things may not be clicking socially just yet. They may suffer physical sickness due to a new environment. Etc. Instead of recognizing that true contentment comes from Christ alone and clinging to their Savior, they turn their back on the faith because their lives have not improved, which is why they TRIED it in the beginning. The difference between them and the true convert is that they TRIED on the Lord Jesus Christ, He didn't improve their lives, so now they turn away. If they were true converts, they would let suffering run its course and cling ever tighter to their Savior, because they understand that the suffering of this present time doesn't compare to the glory that will be revealed to them.

I think a major issue facing college students (pertaining to faith) is apathy. Students who attend Christian colleges and universities can become too comfortable and do not pursue a personal relationship with God, making it very easy to walk away from an impersonal faith. In addition, I know of several students who have come to Cedarville because they formerly attended very 'legalistic' schools that were actually pushing them away from pursuing their faith. On the other hand, secular universities and colleges can sometimes be too liberal, emphasizing choice to the extent that Christian students who are not well-grounded in their faith find it easy to avoid pursuing Christ and go with the flow of the majority of the students. As a personal example, I have a sister who is attending a state school in my home state, and she did not enter the college with a solid relationship with God. As a result, she has not pursued involvement in any Christian organizations on campus or even gone to church at all while at

school. Her faith is hidden beneath a layer of apathy, and I suspect that the same situation occurs on campus' nationwide.

Lack of involvement at a local church

Simultaneous loss of family support, and increase in peer pressures

Personal lack of discipline in devotions

The biggest challenge I faced was leaving my friends, who are mostly non-Christian, back home. The challenge for me was that we all did the same things. Drinking, drugs, you name it. We did all of that. The reason this was a spiritual struggle is because I got out of it. I was forgiven and they weren't. I felt undeserving because the only difference was God. And yes, that is a very significant difference. But, I guess it's almost like a survivors guilt feeling, I received grace when the rest of them did not. This did actually almost turn me away because I couldn't explain why.

This could just be me, but it was definitely my biggest struggle. How to handle it? It's tough. I just try to live my life for Christ as much as I can and hopefully my friends will notice the difference and follow me.

I think one of the biggest challenges, especially for new or weak Christians attending secular schools, would be the desire not to risk friendships by being too pushy with one's faith, and that leads to limiting one's own walk with God. In a climate where standing and popularity means everything, a bold Christian faith stands to throw a wrench into a student's own plans to make friends. When you add a climate without much accountability for spiritual disciplines, it only makes the slide away from Christianity that much easier.

I think that one reason why student's walk away from God is because they were forced into their faith by their parents and now they are on their own at college. They depend on themselves to get themselves through the hard things in life, which begins with the college years (ie. living away from home, no parent's rules or authority, different/new friends, etc.).

One thing that would help with this is integrating Bible studies and accountability groups/partners that will challenge the students' faith in God instead of letting it fall to the side or letting it slip away completely... and Cedarville does an amazing job with this!

A challenge to my faith that has happened since I've been at college is sticking up for what I believe is right around those that are fellow believers. I fear more judgment from them than if I were at a public university because in doing here sometimes I am judged "too radical"...which if you knew me personally, you would realize that is honestly not the case.

Another challenge to my faith is determining truth from its ultimate source (the Bible) and not from human faults....How I feel or what I'm trying to convey is the feeling like many of those not saved looking in on "Christians" who say they believe in God but don't live like it....When I see "believers" say or state they believe in God yet go around and legit bully others, I contemplate "How is faith real?" or if that's how they act I don't want to be a Christian. So it's a challenge for me to just keep reminding myself that humans don't determine/ I can't base my belief in God on what people do. I need to remember that God's love and what He already has done and what His Word says that determines what is true and what true faith is all about.

It's very easy for us to buy into what our professors are teaching us. It may be because it's required to pass a given class, but regardless, we take a lot of what professors say to be "gospel". I think this is true especially if we already are inclined to think in the manner our professors are teaching us to.

College has been a time in my life where I have begun to think for myself and my professors/peers viewpoints have been an enormous part of that.

College for me when attending for my Bachelors was all about independence...doing it on my own was important, and by being complacent in my faith at that time, I instead put all my time into working and studying. It wasn't until I was finished with my B.S. that I realized it was missing. It was definitely being caught up in the moment of college that made me not forget, but just not make it my major priority.

The first thing that came to mind when you asked this question was my person experience my freshman year of college. I attended Pensacola Christian College the fall semester of my freshman year. It wasn't even three weeks into classes that I got a call from my dad telling me of a family crisis. Talk about hitting a brick wall going full speed! I was 16 plus hours away from my family and I got this kind of news, let me tell you, I definitely wasn't praising God for this trial He was putting me through. So for the rest of the semester I had to deal with that, the pain it was bringing me and my family. However, I didn't walk away from the faith only because of the people that surrounded me during this time. Strong christians were showing their true colors to me and helping me through that time. The Lord brought me here to Cedarville in the Spring semester of my freshman year and the professors here walked me through this valley without even knowing what they were doing.

So from my own personal story I guess I could say one big reason why students would walk from the faith is because they are finally having a taste of the world thrown at them. All of our lives our parents are there to protect us and they are smoothing our path for us. But once we step out of their home and into a new environment we start to see things so differently. The second we get that first bite of how cruel the world really is, we throw our hands up and say, "where are you now God?!" When in all reality He is standing right there but we have taken our eyes off Him because of all the "new" things that surround us.

So my own first year of college was a pretty rough ride, to say the least. But thankfully I was wise enough to surround myself with Christian leaders, mentor, and friends that walked with me. I think that is another reason why students turn from God. They find themselves being able to pick new friends, pick new groups, and pick new adventures to pursue. Far too often, however, because of the "sheltered Christian upbringing" the students came from, the students pick those wrong friends, wrong groups and wrong path to pursue because they now can make their own decisions and decide what they want to do without Mom or Dad telling them what to do. Free will is a great thing, but often abused by young people and young Christians.

I think that pressure to be in a relationship and to find a future spouse is a big distraction and can draw people away from their faith. I haven't found a solution to this, but I do believe that instead of giving in to society's ideals, students should focus on learning to be content in whatever situation God has placed them in for the moment. In college there are so many reasons to be jealous of others; it's easy to envy someone who's in a great relationship, gets stellar grades, has lots of friends, etc. But as Christians we should ask God to help us be content and joyful with the circumstances and talents He has given us because everyone's life is different and that's ok.

I believe one of the major challenges is that there is a lack of apologetics teaching during high school and even middle school. The book, *Already Gone* by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, highlights this challenge well and even makes the assertion that Sunday School is part of the problem, showing statistics that those who attend Sunday School are more likely to leave the faith. The reason is that Sunday School treats Bible stories, such as Noah and the Ark or David and Goliath more like "fairy tales" rather than as real historical fact. Then when students get to college, they are challenged by science and historical facts for which they do not know how to respond because they have never been taught. Therefore, I believe one way to meet this challenge is to emphasize the teaching of

apologetics in Sunday School.

Another challenge in the faith I believe is seeing much conflict and negative aspects within the church. This includes famous Christians who are viewed as hypocritical after falling in temptation to the very thing they preached against. Also, many may become jaded and cynical when seeing fighting going on within a single church or even between different denominations. While Christians are not perfect, and we should not expect perfection, I do think we need to make the effort to promote unity within the global Church.

Finally, I think a big challenge to the faith is the misconceived notion that becoming a Christian requires you to give up your ability to think. When students then get to college, they are forced to think critically, possibly in ways they never did before. This may lead one to view college and Christianity as incompatible, leading Christian youth to walk away from the faith. I think as Christians, we should be contributing to the dialogue on all issues, thinking critically and making unique contributions to the discussion.

Coming in contact with people of differing worldviews, especially if they are more confident in theirs than you are in yours

Also, when someone's life has been easy and they start to struggle in college it can be challenging to have the same "sunny days" and "rainy days" faith

Finding a solid church

Friends

Professors

Hypocrisy

Parents

Party

People questioning you in your faith and not being able to answer the questions so you turn to what they have

When you come to college you are usually introduced to a group of people, whether your choice or not, that become your "go to" group in order to have some social outlet. This group can either challenge or hinder your walk with God and as a result can have varying results. I would say that not being afraid to seek the right friends and groups that will challenge your walk with God is the most important thing to overcoming walking away from your faith.

I am struggling with all the reading involved, not just with one text book for a class but sometimes up to three per class. The demands of school work has been straining to family, church and friends commitments. I don't know how traditional students keep up and get everything done. It has been far too easy to put God on the back burner this semester.

I know that even here at Cedarville, the philosophy class I took raised issues that were difficult for me to deal with. Sometimes I wondered if the God that I felt that I knew was really the same God that I thought that He was. I got through those experiences by talking to people, praying, and not allowing any new idea I heard in class to automatically change how I think about God. If my idea of who God is needs to change, it needs to change slowly through much deliberate prayer, thought, and discussion.

One of the challenges to my faith has been exposure to texts written by people with worldviews which differ from Christianity, as I can see why many people hold these worldviews. Although I was exposed to them in my Christian high school, I was not given many of the supporting arguments for opposing worldviews to which

Christians do not have clear answers. One example of this is the textbook for the biology class which I am taking. However the positive aspect of this particular challenge is that I am searching to the scriptures for answers making my roots grow deeper in my faith.

Because of the busy college schedule, church can easily be pushed to the back burner. I hear, "I'm skipping church because I have too much homework today" almost every weekend when that same person went shopping all day on Saturday. The lack of involvement in a church body is one of the biggest things that kept me from growing at Cedarville last year. Without being involved in a church, just driving to hear a sermon seems rather pointless when we have chapel sermons every other day of the week. I suggest encouraging students to become an integral part of the church, so they realize it's importance to their spiritual growth and maturity.

The entrance into college brings a greater level of responsibility without accountability that today's youth is unprepared for. So many new friends to make, places to go, things to try; and no parents, and no home church. Also, college students tend to think they are doing their own thing, being "who they are." Part of that quasi-rebellious spirit is often fed by professors teaching things students have never heard before, even religious things. Add peer pressure into the mix, and the result can be disastrous.

I am the oldest of three children. Being the first to head off to college gives you a different type of relationship with parents. If your parents feel they have not prepared you enough, they cannot help but mention that when they send you off. It can create a sort of self-doubt, which certainly does not help during nay life transition. It is a wonderful opportunity to turn to God for guidance and strength. (Also can be chance to encourage your parents that they did a good job if you prove them wrong !)

The social arena is another area that causes confusion. How many friends do I make? Can I trust these people? What is Cedarville really like? Then you have to deal with the "bubble effect". There is some sort of chemical in the air that makes people feel like being single is unnatural. I know this does not paint the picture in the perfect way, but that is the jist of it. (There is nothing wrong with seeing if God's mate for you is here, but do not be obsessed with it. "Do not awaken love until it so desires") You might ask how this affects faith? Well, my finite human mind wants to seek God, develop discipline for studies, and explore the wonderful social opportunities I have here, such as dating. Unfortunately, even with the best intentions, it can be difficult to maintain all three. I learned this concept pretty quickly and decided to "dance rather than dive" with all relationships. At college, like any time or place, God has to be my **top** priority. Simple fact of the matter is that I need Him to remind me of who I am in Him, to get perspective, hope, and strength.

I guess for me my biggest problem was knowing how to handle stress. I am the person that believes if you honor God with your work, he'll help you push through work without breaks until the job is complete. I tend to work harder, but not always smarter. Stress can warp your perspective a bit.

Sorry if this wasn't too helpful. I feel like I've always believed God was right there, and that he was pleased, albeit not to vocal at times. I have trusted Him, stayed grounded in His living Word, and used the wonderful invention of skype many a time with my family. I've been blessed never to think of abandoning Him as my Lord or savior while at Cedarville, though I was the most depressed I've ever been in my life this past semester. But God and my family is good. This has been another challenging period in my life (I had to learn how to learn with my hearing loss the first couple years of my life), but I am loving the growth.

WAYS TO HANDLE THE CHALLENGES: I) Always be talking to God. II) Stay humble III) Stay organized IV) Talk to

someone

V) Take good care of your "temple" VI) Do your schoolwork to primarily to honor the Lord, not to meet the grade

VII) Enjoy the good pleasures God has given you (ie music, art, the sunset, a beautiful landscape) VIII) Take a fun break once in a while, even if you don't have the time IX) "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things." Philippians 4:8. ----at least once a day, try to envision what you will be like when you have no sin nature, when you are spending eternity with God, and say, "Why not live like that NOW." For now, C.S. Lewis' Narnia will have to suffice as imaginary supplement of what is to come.

I have to say that the hardest thing that I have faced as a college student in the aspect of my walk with Christ is remaining pure. When you are dating someone or have a fiancé that is a reasonable distance away from the university you attend, it is easy to take a greater notice of her physical beauty.

I would say that one of the biggest reasons Christians walk away from their faith in college is because of the anti-intellectual climate in many evangelical churches and homes. Throughout their childhood, they hear that everything needs to be based on not reason, but faith. In fact, reason and faith are posed as enemies. Deep theology and apologetics are seen needless burdens. Then when young Christians get to college, they realize their faith has no base, no foundation. Their professors give them better answers to life's questions than they ever received from their parents or church. In turn, they abandon their faith. Os Guinness calls this anti-intellectualism in evangelicalism both a scandal and a sin that is handicapping the our effectiveness in the intellectual community.

Some ideas how can Christians attempt to fix the problem: Return to the love of intellectualism that the Puritans had. The Puritans had a remarkable drive for knowledge that motivated them to found schools such as Harvard. Churches and Christian homes need to educate their children. Feed them doctrine and apologetics so when they get to college, they aren't floored by all the charges against God.

I apologize for the length of this answer, but I believe that the testimony of people who have struggled is the biggest apologetic for our faith.

I can relate quite personally to those who would walk away from their faith. Before I came to Cedarville I commuted to pursue my Nursing degree at a technical college. Even though I had a strong background(i.e. Sunday school, AWANA, VBS, home school, Bible college), during this time I started doubting my faith.

This is why I believe that no matter what background you come from, the transition from high school to college will try your faith; but I also believe that God allows you to come across people and situations that will try you in order to help you.

I am not sure if I was truly saved before I faced these struggles, because my decisions were based on only what I knew at the time. It was right to go to church and have all the answers, and it was easy to follow the examples of those who you perceived knew it all. My faith was based my family and the foundation of my Christian education.

I would not be the same person I am today if I had not come to the point where I had no place to run but God. During a vacation, my older brother and sister-in-law questioned me which caused me to question my faith. I knew all the answers; I had gone to a one-year Bible college the year before all this happened, but I still doubted.

Family was my biggest challenge when approaching this situation. I trust my brother, and although he is not a Christian, I value his opinion. When he asked me how a Muslim in another country who had never heard of Jesus Christ the Savior before could be justly sent to hell, I doubted.

Growing up in the church, I trusted everything I was taught about God. I had not come across teachings that had rocked my world; if I had they were merely theoretical in nature. I learned all of the answers, through a

Christian education, to counter questions about Christianity. If asked why there was a God, I knew to point to Genesis 1, Romans 1, and the scientific method which proved that something could not come out of nothing. I memorized pre-written arguments against the evils of Buddhism, Post-Modernism, Communism, and others.

I was not prepared, however, for the emotional responses to the problems of hypocrisy, or common grace. When my sister-in-law described her Islamic friend from college who worshiped purely five times a day, I wondered how someone could believe so sincerely in the wrong faith.

When my brother asked me about the hypocrisy of my extended family who had never been out of the country, yet believed that their church of a few hundred followers were the only ones going to heaven, I doubted. I asked myself the same questions that I had been taught the correct responses to. I felt brainwashed because before this I had thought of followers of other religions as enemies. Within minutes, I was convinced that those inside my own faith were the problem. They were the ones who were not loving, not accepting, not understanding.

Then, they both asked me how someone could believe such a shallow, narrow minded theology. I remember walking away from the conversation praying to a God who may not have been the same that I known, prayed to, or obeyed. I prayed the cliché, yet sincere prayer: "God, if You're really there, I need You to do something. I'm losing my faith."

A day later my prayer was answered. A random stranger on the beach struck up a conversation with me. At first our conversation was small talk about the talent of Taylor Swift, our dedication to football, and a hatred for politics. Then the question came: "Hey," he said, "what do you think is going to happen if the our economy fails, and the world falls apart?" I remember staring across a sunset as I apathetically gave an answer: "Well, I believe God really is in control. I don't worry about it." While I was saying this I thought to myself-What ever that means. I just want this conversation to be over.

He continued talking and we found out that we had both gone to one-year Bible colleges. I was very quick to agree that "that was the best year of my life," and "I learned a lot," also "I can't believe we have this in common," because he was attractive and nice, even though I no longer believed it.

As we said goodbye, I was expecting a familiar "God bless you" or "see you in heaven" conclusion. His words are ever with me and are the reason that I still hold on to the faith in my God:

"I love Jesus Christ so much. I would do anything for Him! I am astonished at the fact that He loves me and blesses me. You need to know that people in your life will try to take what you believe away from you. There are so many things out there that draw you away from God. Stay strong!"

I was shocked. I remembered my prayer the day before. I felt no overwhelming emotion towards God's love, but my faith was reestablished. It took me time to recover emotionally from that attack, but I know that my faith is genuine and strong.

I believe that the best apologetic for the Christian faith is a genuine testimony of God's people. All other basis is merely theoretical.

I am not sure that our focus should be on helping students not doubt their faith. I know that in my case, I needed to doubt God in order for him to show me how my faith has nothing to do with my ability. Because of my trial, I trust God. He will bring people, instances into my life during doubt because He loves me and cares about my growth.

I am unsure about those Christians who stroll past God's blessings to keep walking away from Him. I venture to say that it is only a matter of time before a true believer will be brought back. Because I believe that an untested faith is not realistic, I do not think that we should avoid trying situations in our lives.

Maybe the focus should be on God's grace rather than the trying of faith. I am still not sure exactly what I believe about what happened to me and how it relates to the rest of college populations except that I love God more now since He followed through for me.

- 1. Groupthink. When professors and fellow students all have assumptions and attitudes very different from your own and may even seem shocked that you believe differently, it creates a lot of pressure to standardize your views.**
- 2. Complacency. In a heavily Christian environment like Cedarville, it is easy to become saturated with spiritual talk and attitudes to the point where there is no feeling of need for a more meaningful relationship with God. Even pleas for intensity and seriousness can become routine and casual if repeated constantly in chapel or class. In my experience, my spiritual life has seemed far more vibrant when I was at a secular community college and a public trade high school.**

The biggest challenge to my faith is the degree of ungodliness in God's people. There will be days where I look at everyone around me and have the thought: "Why does the body of Christ suck so much?" From an intellectual standpoint, this doesn't bother me (I know that the church is made up of sinners), but when I'm down and need support, it sometimes bothers me that everyone I see is a sinner.

It has been hard for me to find a church to attend. I have found several things that are taught in some of the churches that I do not believe. It has helped me to find people with similar beliefs to me and to talk to people from home who share my beliefs.

Some things I know challenge someone's faith are loneliness and wondering where God was in the new world and environment. I also know that there is so much freedom that it is so easy to sleep in on Sunday mornings and skip church and then skip Bible studies and cut devotions from the day. There are so many things going on at college that it is easy to forget about God unless we purposefully make him a priority.

I believe one of the reasons that many college students abandon their faith would be influence of others, that is, watching close friends or relations that have been declaring faith in the same ideals that these students stand for leave and start living in sin or simply declaring there is no God. This creates, I believe, ripple effect, in which the impact that single student has on others causes a secondary wave of doubt. A way this could be resolve may be through counseling, in which an older, wiser believer comes alongside and encourages those who have been affected by this departure. Another reason for students to question religious practices would be hypocrisy: observing others whose lifestyle and words do not match up, who say they are Christians, but then live as though Christ has no importance in their lives, and they can still do the things they want. This is a harder issue to combat, I believe, because it may necessitate confrontation with the person in question. Questioning them why "faith and deeds" aren't connected, or asking them if prayer is needed to overcome certain sins may help this, though a balance must be struck, because the risk is run that the individual may become more standoffish and actually leave more quickly because of your interference. Also, it may be a misperception on the first person's part, in that the person in question does not realize they are doing acts contrary to Scripture. Finally, I think doubt may play a major role in causing new students to reject the teachings they have grown up with. Perhaps struggling with secret sins, but still trying to follow God causes them to think "I must not be a good Christian if I'm doing these things that are frowned upon and no one else I know has problems with" (e.g. masturbation, eating disorders) Some ways that this difficulty may be resolved could include accountability partners and/or others sharing stories with the people that have these difficulties, such as "I struggled with that same problem, here's how Christ gave me strength to overcome."

The hardest thing I have trouble doing is staying in touch/maintaining friendships with friends back home. It is hard once you move away to 'prioritize' which friendships are more important (aren't they all though?) and which friendships really matter. Even only living an hour and a half away from home, it is hard facing the fact that many

people in your past might not make it to your future. It's funny how God works out your friendships, and places exactly who you need in your life.

- 1. The lack of a parental figure making us go to church, community groups, prayer groups, etc...**
- 2. The natural want to rebel against authority and live my own life.**
- 3. Some may be sick of church and getting told how to live their lives and therefore, abandon their faith.**
- 4. They may never have been truly saved to begin with.**
- 5. The pressure of college along with the workload easily makes us forget God and maintaining our relationship with him.**
- 6. The sudden realization of the freedom we suddenly attain away from home, smacks us in the face, and the temptation to rebel from God becomes greater.**

Over this past summer I had a lot of struggles with the fact that it was difficult to prove the existence of God scientifically. I feel like this pushes a lot of academics away from the concept of an omnipotent ruler (God). We put so much stock in science that we feel like God too must be scientifically proven. However, we never consider the fact that it could be impossible to prove the existence of God. This would actually make sense in light of how the Bible says we are saved by faith. Thus, if we are saved by faith, and faith is defined as belief despite the logic and factual evidence, wouldn't it be impossible for us to prove that God exists? If we could prove the existence of God, then we wouldn't have faith, and without faith God cannot be real. This then requires us to ask a question: should we accept faith if faith disregards evidence? This is where our free will comes in. Obviously, not everyone will be willing to abandon scientific evidence to dedicate their lives to a God that may or may not be imaginary. However, isn't accepting faith part of laying down our human nature? Shouldn't a God who is a god of paradoxes (for example, He is three-in-one) also exist as a paradox? To be real yet impossible to prove the existence of? Shouldn't a God who can know everything be able to accomplish this? Does our science supersede this possibility? I believe that until we come to terms with this concept, many students and members of academia of our generation will struggle with the existence of God.

- 1) Whether we notice it or not, professors have a huge impact on our outlook. Being surrounded by educators who even just subtly degraded student's faith could be quite challenging.**
- 2) Social interaction: in most colleges successful people must know a lot of people (on a shallow level), and knowing a lot of people usually requires partying with a lot of people.**
- 3) There is not much time for church or finding good Christian support.**
- 4) You are leaving the faith of your parent's and finding one for yourself.**

1 I would say, specifically for Cedarville, but certainly applicable to all colleges is the facade of saving face. When we lack vulnerability, honesty, and true community then we lack love, passion, and proactive ministry that provide contemporary examples of zeal for God, not just the "awesome God stories" that happened 5, 10, or 20 years ago.

Other problems:

A focus on only intellectualism (in the Church as a whole). We tend to focus ONLY on the intellectual aspect. This is why Francis Chan wrote his book "Forgotten God." While we SHOULD be prepared to have an answer at all times, we too often have an 18 inch disconnect between our hearts and our minds.

Lack of true passion. Most of us growing up did not have examples of people truly on fire for God. As one pastor once said, "People who aren't in love [with God] mistake sacrifice for passion." We lack examples of intellectual individuals who are expressive in their passion and sacrifice willingly their status for the sake of God.

Lack of teaching. Most of us do not attend churches that teach biblical worldviews in GODLY ways. We, as young people, look primarily to the pastors for service. We ourselves are not encouraged much to pursue God on our

own terms. This cannot really be taught, but only shown. And most church leaders don't know how to show this pursuit of God because they themselves do not pursue him. All the great leaders of the faith (Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Augustine, etc.) were so intensely involved in powerful prayer. We lack the examples of powerful prayer and only see showy prayers and unexpectant prayers with little rejoicing and genuine praise for what God has done and will do.

It seems to me that a lot of young people might become overwhelmed with the number of those of the opposite sex around them, particularly those who are interested in them. I think they may end up walking away from God so they can fulfill their physical longings without having to admit they're accountable to God. I think this happens regardless of the student's past schooling. Of course there are exceptions, but this is what I've noticed: As students leave their families, especially if their family were most/part of their "faith backbone", the students have a hard time resisting those things against God, because they don't really feel accountable.

I have found that a challenge to my faith while at college is time. Some days I end up getting up at 5:30am and then not getting a break till after 7:00pm, then it is time to do homework and get to bed at a reasonable time so I can get up at 5:30 the next day. A good way that I have found to get around this is to schedule a time at night that I will spend with God and if I happen to have a couple of free moments during the day I either pull out my Bible or Pray.

This, however does not always work and I am still working on finding another way to do my devotions.

Even when I do not spend time with God I still rely on Him and trust that he will help me through my day.

One of the biggest challenges for me personally was finding a good church home, and getting involved. When you're home, it feels like you can be involved in a church easier than when you are away at college. Often, I feel like I'm just another College Kid.

I think that because of the work load for students every weekend, a lot of them don't want to go to church on Sunday, either because it is their one day of rest, or because of all there is to do before Monday comes. I think one of the biggest challenges to my faith in the last three years has been coming to terms with denominational differences. While growing up, you just assume that the denomination you were brought up under is the best one; however, when coming to college and meeting so many people from other denominations, you realize all the different opinions and beliefs there really are out there. So the challenge is to discover what you really believe, apart from how you grew up or what you were taught all your life - you must figure out what you, individually, between yourself and God know to be true and then attach that to a denomination. The Bible classes here have been helpful to me in understanding that there are so many different beliefs in the world. Before the Bible minor here, I knew that there were other beliefs but I did not know the details of them. Also, being able to experiment with different churches while here at college has also helped me in this process. I also think that another big challenge to faith during college is discovering that the world is a messy place, and life is not easy. When growing up, you think that the world is a perfect, neat, beautiful place but when you get out on your own, especially as a Christian, you realize that the world is hard and God puts struggles and trials in your life to test your faith. A good way that Cedarville helps with this realization is offering the free counseling as well as the mentoring program through FOCUS leadership. Being able to talk with an older, wiser adult about life struggles is a blessing because they have been there before - maybe not in the same exact position but definitely something similar and they know how hard it is to live a Christian life. Also, having awesome friends is a blessing during these times of struggle.

Freedom - Many of my friends went into college with the wrong view on freedom. They were under the impression that freedom is being able to do whatever you want to do. They think that somehow we are poised

in a neutral position between good and evil with some internal ability or power to choose God on our own. Then they are equipped with the apathy that says, "I just don't care about all that right now, I just want to have fun." These friends would never have come to Cedarville because they didn't want anyone else telling them what they could or couldn't do. I actually knew some people who made fun of me for wanting to go to "prison" for college.

Questions and Challenges to Faith - *This could either come from friends who are really struggling with deep questions (like the ones you are going through in Chapel) or from Professors who make convincing arguments against traditional Christian beliefs. The answer to this one for me was having a strong background in the Bible. I had a great Systematic Theology class Senior year of high school (I went to a Christian high school) which really prepared me to have answers for most of those questions. More important than a class is your own personal Bible study and being able to "Make your faith your own."*

Distractions- *Just regular things that go on, in and around campus. These aren't necessarily bad distractions, but considering the fact that homework already takes up a lot of time, combine that with a job, everyday tasks, and try to add leisure time in there that comes from going to campus events, and other stuff, you really start to limit the time that you could spend with God. That is if you put too much emphasis on the "other stuff". I know many who have lost their zeal for God because they've gotten so caught up in their busy schedule. They don't leave that time in their day to truly seek Him in that secret place. And it comes to a point where a pattern forms and they don't even want to spend time with Him even when they have a chance to. They'd rather play video games or mess around with facebook or hang out with others in the dorm who may have even formed the same pattern. Distractions may seem small, but if we allow them to compromise our time with God, the time that matters the most, then we allow our spiritual life to run dry, and we begin to tolerate sin and let it take control of our life.*

Lack of discernment- *Discernment to me, is knowing and remaining faithful to biblical truth, while being sensitive and open to what the Spirit of God has to say. Too many times, we as Christians settle to be spoon fed. It is vitally important that we not only listen to a person giving a message, but also listen to the Holy Spirit that is in us to edify ourselves, confirm the truth of the message to ourselves, and question ourselves to challenge us to go deeper. But this also is important because a sensitivity and openness to the Holy Spirit combined with a firm foundation in the truth of God's word will protect us from false teaching and will help in edifying the body of Christ. Too many place their foundations in a denomination or a pastor rather than the truth of the Bible. We should be proud of our roots, but we should never set aside biblical truths for them. Denominations can be great, but they all have their faults. One we can all count on that doesn't have faults is God and His faithful word. PTL! Not recognizing and pursuing the glory put within us-The Holy Spirit has always been a touchy subject in the church. Especially the western church. It's always a little nerve-racking just knowing that there is someone inside you who is all powerful, true in everything to the point of offense, and unpredictable in nature. I love the way Allen Hood puts it, "The Holy Spirit has become like the drunk uncle that you hide in the closet during family reunions. You never know what He will say or do." He is so unpredictable because we have no idea just how powerful and glorious the Man living in is really is. And this Man is trying to conform us to the image of Jesus every second of the day. But to do that means calling us out on certain things that are not Christ-like, and pushing us to go deeper into the things God has for us. It is only the Holy Spirit that will convict us of sin in our lives. And we must be willing to listen and obey Him when He calls or points things out. Many new believers will say "Okay God, I will love you and worship you and follow you wherever you go," but then will freeze up in their walk and make excuses when things start to get uncomfortable. We need to be able to accept the fact that when we choose to follow Jesus, He puts His unpredictable, all powerful Spirit in us to guide us closer to Him and to aid us in our triumphs and trials. We are literally chasing a WILD goose. A lot of times we get really comfortable and would rather chase an easygoing turtle that doesn't go anywhere too*

fast or anywhere dangerous. That is not the nature of the Holy Spirit. The great thing about all of this is the fact that God knows what is best for us and we can trust Him while we chase this wild goose. Remember the Holy Spirit is the only thing that will guide us to the Father's heart. He is the one in us that wants to worship, the one in us that wants to pray, the one in us that wants to fast, the one in us that wants to know everything about God's word, the one that wants to praise Him even in our toughest trials etc.... We as Christians need to learn how to rely desperately on the Holy Spirit! And trust His leadership. Our flesh will never want to worship, pray, fast, contend for more, etc... There is nothing in us besides the Holy Spirit that will draw us closer to God! We must deny ourselves daily and rely on Him daily. So many fall away because they try to rely on themselves. It's impossible! It's too much! So they get discouraged, and they stop spending time with God. They stop reading the Bible. Their ministry becomes dry. We cannot do anything without the aid and total dependence on the Spirit that empowers us. And it truly does EMPOWER us. We all know those moments where we wish we could tell someone something yet can't find the words to explain ourselves. I hate those moments. I just wish I could express to them what I am truly thinking and feeling. Well that is why Jesus left His living Spirit with us. He automatically knows what we are trying to say when we can't find the words to express ourselves. He knows because the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings and words that sound like gibberish to a normal person. That's why people speak in tongues. Not to show others "Hey look at me! I speak a Heavenly language! I'm super spiritual!" They do it because they can't express themselves any other way. There are simply no words to describe it. But the Spirit knows and understands every part of it and intercedes for them. It's like drilling deep into the earth and working to draw up precious oil to the surface. When we pray in the Spirit, we are drawing up to the surface our deepest most indescribable thoughts and feelings that we have towards God in the well of our hearts, and presenting it to Him through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. But we are not just digging up our feelings and our thoughts, but we are also going deep into digging up the thoughts and feelings toward others and ourselves that come from the well of the Father's heart and bringing them to the surface. Truly glorious. In my life I've always held on to that common saying, "Seek the Giver not the gifts." That is one of the biggest lies I have ever stumbled upon. You can't seek one or the other. You get them both! In the right order that is. We mistake the power of the Holy Spirit so much! When we choose to follow God wherever, we receive His Spirit and along with that come the gifts. The apostle Paul tells us to seek and contend for the gifts most useful for the body of Christ. These edify and bless the church. And they're functional. The gift of prophesy is not only great for edifying the church, but also offers words of encouragement and confirmation to many. The gift of healing serves as not only a divine cure for sickness and disease and physical brokenness, but also serves as a faith-booster to believers, and a witness to unbelievers. We need to humbly and meekly keep in mind though that it is not us that are doing these amazing works. It is for His glory always. Without recognizing that we as Christians must rely desperately on the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us in everything, and the power that comes from Him, we risk leading a boring, comfortable spiritual life. Nobody likes boring. It's quite boring. Usually when things get boring we stop doing whatever is boring. Like old video games.

The challenge for me to work through God's current involvement in everyday life. People have many opinions and talk as if they know for sure when God is "up to something" or that they experienced a "God thing." Furthermore, I have been exposed to many denominations and church services that the whole realm of the Holy Spirit's involvement with gifts and signs is a big gap of confusion in my mind.

Being a freshman and, like most, coming straight out of highschool, I found that my spiritual life has dwindled in the sense that I do not have the drive to study the word. I thought about the impact my youth group had on my life. I loved the way my church youth group functioned. We met every Wednesday night for 2 hours of worship, teaching and fellowship. In addition, having youth leaders always there setting up mission trips and work days made it easy to serve God. There was never a time when I felt far from the Lord. However, youth

group does not extend into college and for those that do, they are set up much differently. Mostly, spirituality in college seems to be focused on individual devotion which requires immediate dedication. I feel that many Christian college students, including myself, are unprepared and figuratively standing flat-footed when faced with individual biblical study when entering their first few years of college.

I think one of the greatest challenges to college students is making faith their own. Many students up until going to college have just trusted their parent's faith, but if we fail to make it our own we will fail to keep following. The way to solve this is worldview training and starting the process in high school.

- 1) Business, and losing sight of the path***
- 2) Weak faith clobbered by the real world***
- 3) Indifference***

I believe much of it lies in the lack of thinking (in general, but here, specifically in belief systems) prior to college. Sheltering can be part of this. People are not prepared intellectually to defend their viewpoints against opposing viewpoints. I think children need an early exposure to unbiased presentations of opposing viewpoints. They must be aware of the power that lies past the boundaries of their comfortable home before they leave home because they will have to cope with the world at some point in life.

One of the challenges I faced when starting college was having full control over my own faith. Growing up my parents always made sure I went to church every week. But when I came here to school I became my own responsibility to get to church and to actively pursue my own faith.

Coming from a science based major, it's difficult to keep a solid walk with Christ when you feel pressed for time. For subjects that require the bulk of your time it is easy to not only let personal relationships go but also, even more so, to grow distant from God. During the semester I reach for my textbooks more than my Bible because of the amount of work I need to get done. Sometimes doing anything that doesn't involve schoolwork can seem like a poor utilization of time.

Here are some personal ones that I particularly struggle with and are challenges to most if not all people with Christianity and God in particular...

In my understanding as I grow more and more in my faith it is very difficult to hold to the statement that "science and faith or intertwined." When I learn more about the world, even if it's only a high school education and one semester at CU, I find it difficult to somehow explain for talking animals, flying people, raising of the dead, and other miracles. Along with trying to explain the relation between science, I tend to question the very basic questions, like who am I and so forth. This, in turn, leads me to question why God lets horrible situations happen to people. If there is a good God why does he not practice good if he is a "personal God." Personally the biggest problem that I have with the reason for walking away from the faith is the lack of severity that the Christian community has with their faith. Most people I come across live equivalent lives if not worse lives than those of non-believers, apart from attending a Church or reading the bible. We talk here at CU as if lifting hands, praying in public, or getting really emotional during worship makes us more "Christian", is faith merely a feeling? And if it isn't, I assure you that this is not what we practice at CU. Faith is found in your deeds, and I understand the difficulty first hand with acting out your faith in an environment where it is assumed that everyone is already saved and has everything together. Along with the lack of understanding for the true meaning of faith, Christians today, specifically the Church are often unaware of their "exclusivity." I understand the rashness of my comments but they are necessary, the Church is in a state of turmoil and instead of blaming Joel Olsteen we must blame ourselves, we are the bricks of the Church and we need to change. We

need to represent what the Church originally meant, which was to heal broken, confused people by leading them to the Church. The challenges in summary are the struggle between the relation between science and faith, why bad things happen to people from an personal God, understanding of faith, being able to differentiate between believer and non-believers, and finally the exclusivity of the current Church which is found in their individual people not in groups.

I would say that one of the biggest issues would be that when students go off to college they then are forced to make their faith actually be their own instead of just tagging along with their parents to church every week, and that's when they realize that they were never really serious about their faith at all and so they leave

I think one of the hardest challenges is knowing why you believe what you believe. Before college, you just know what you believe, but you never have to explain why you believe it. This can be often hard and allow you to question your faith.

Also, it is hard because often times you have hard classes and feel like you can't do it anymore. I have found that this makes my faith stronger knowing that God carries me through, but for something this could cause challenges to one's faith. I hope this helps! Have a great day!

My situation is a bit unique, but hopefully I can provide some insight into this problem from my perspective. I served in the army for 6 years prior to coming to Cedarville on the GI Bill. I was saved when I joined, but I hadn't been to church in a very long time. I met an amazing Christian named ____ at the institute, and he got me to go to church again. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be attending CU now. I wasn't the only one ____ reached out to. He also talked to a mutual friend of ours named ____ who eventually accepted Christ as his savior. I had never seen anyone more "on fire" for Christ than ____ after he had found salvation. He married another mutual Christian friend of ours named ____ and our friendship grew to be very strong. To this day, I have never had a Christian relationship like we all had with each other. Eventually, we all graduated from the institute and went to our respective duty stations all over the world. Focused on our new careers, we eventually stopped talking as much. I deployed to Iraq where I really fell out of touch with them. I came back to find out that ____ and ____, who were now civilians and using the GI Bill to attend college, considered themselves to be agnostic, and today, full blown atheists. To bring this back to your request, I feel very responsible for their choices. They were still young Christians in need of guidance from older, wiser Christians. They weren't able to find a good church home right away, or other Christian friends to lean on. When confronted by other atheists, whether they were students or professors, they didn't have the answers or the resilience to stand strong. This is what happens to many young Christians when they first leave their home. Their faith has to be strong to stand on its own for a time, and they must diligently seek and pray for other Christians in their lives.

It is frustrating trying to find a new church. That is probably why most people lose their faith in the first years of college.

I can't say that I've walked away from my faith while in college but I have had periods of doubt to say the least. I think one of the biggest hindrances to faith during college years is just the constant barrage of information. We are having so much information and so many experiences thrown at us that not all of it jives with what we have been taught or what we know of God and the Bible. Having to critically think about hard doctrines like that of hell and creation and the trinity while learning science and experiencing new friendships and relating to popular culture and media makes for a terrific hodgepodge of information that can be a lot to digest and think through. Having to do this while in the midst of say a midterm week or when you have ten papers do is an exhausting proposition, especially when you can't find text that back up what you believe or somebody is presenting text to

the contrary. This is very different from high school where you were getting mostly cookie cutter info and you were completely grounded in your family and church groups. I was actually a freshman at a secular college and I think even though I wasn't necessarily living out my faith God was pulling me back to Him as hard as ever so it was basically impossible for me to question Him even though I wasn't following Him if that makes sense. At a Christian college like Cedarville it is easy to become complacent since nobody is really challenging your faith and so you start to create some of your own doubts it seems. I think part of it is also the fact that the more theology you learn the more questions come up about the intricacies of a doctrine that leave you scratching your head. It's tough to fully take a particular side when somebody can argue from text the other side of it and you see their walk with Christ and their faith is true.

I can say from personal observation that total submersion with peers can lead to college students walking away from their faith. I have a friend from high school who is attending a state school now. As a freshman, his roommate claimed to be Catholic, but his lifestyle exhibited behavior that was not Christian-like. My friend really struggled with the fact that his roommate did not want to be his friend because of his faith, and there were times throughout that first year when he considered drinking or partying so that he could be accepted by said roommate. Peer pressure is intense in high school, but at least you can go home and leave it at the football game or by the lockers. It's a whole different ball game when you're faced with peers 24/7, living lives that reflect a style you don't agree with. I think another factor may be professor influence. My boyfriend, who attends a state university, had a professor tell his class that he doesn't "need an imaginary friend anymore." While secular schools are more likely to challenge your faith at a hard level, even Christian professors can do the same thing. I have a friend who is struggling to understand what she believes because the spiritual leaders in her life have stopped agreeing. As young adults, we're still trying to develop our worldviews. If we lack confidence that we will discover a view that embraces our Christian faith, having people we respect challenge those views can be impossible to deal with.

Freshman year, I really struggled with finding my identity in popularity. I wanted to be the BMOC, the guy that everyone knew. I ran for student government and got involved in many extra-curricular activities. But, I still felt lonely and isolated, even in the midst of some great friendships. It was through this pain that I realized that my identity is found in Christ alone, and in the incredible fact that God loves me. Another idol I struggled with was my dreams for a career. I wanted to be a wealthy businessman, living the American Dream and giving a small portion of myself and my resources to the church. But, through taking classes like Urban Ministry and Contemporary World Missions, and experiencing what it is like to be poor, my career trajectory changed towards ministry. I still want to be an entrepreneur, but with a missional purpose to my businesses and an attitude of complete self-sacrifice to God. The last idol that I really clung to was a certain dating relationship that I did not want to give up. I wanted to date, and she did not feel ready. I created a lot of pain for myself by refusing to let go. Through the pain of that experience God overwhelmed me with His love, and I discovered anew the sweetness of the Gospel -- that God is at work in this world and in my life, and His love is the core reality of my existence. God's love, not a relationship or money or popularity, is what truly defines me. Another issue I have spent many hours pondering is the will of God. The language Christians use -- "God's perfect will", "God's plan for your life" -- seems ambiguous and very misleading. Once I realized that God created me free, and to enjoy freedom, much of my stress melted away. I realized that God could be honored through almost any course I chose, that He is more interested in my motives and how I go about making decisions than in precisely what I choose. Life went from seeming like a corn maze to feeling like a playground where I am free to enjoy the many opportunities He has granted me. I no longer live in fear of deviating from a single, perfect path that God has precisely laid out for me. It is a shift that Henri Nouwen would describe as changing "from the fearful clinging to the fearless play."

This doesn't apply to colleges like Cedarville, but I know that many secular institutions (Penn State, Harvard, etc.) have been very negative towards my friends going into their education system as a Christian. My mother first attended Penn State in 1984 as a Catholic. She will say now that even before she went to Penn State, she was not saved, even though she would've claimed to have been and she lived her life accordingly. However, after 4 years in Penn State's program, she left that university as a feminist that no longer believed in Christ, though she still maintained her morals. Unfortunately, this is a repetitive pattern I've noticed among many of my peers. The mere mention of God in the education system causes a stir, and the secular humanist mindset of our authorities is the main contribution to this growing problem. I believe another issue is that the church, as a whole, isn't doing their part to building up Christian teenagers so that they will be ready to answer the challenges of unbelievers, instead of being broken down and rejecting Christ in the long run.

Often at College we are asked and urged to challenge and question everything. I think, while it is certainly to challenge things to know for certain, it makes it easier to become cynical about your faith.

-Lack of Christian fellowship on campus

-Lack of commitment to personal devotions & church attendance before college

-Varying professors and peers with convincing world views

-Desire to break free from parental expectations

-Community where partying is the norm, and Christianity is for "weird" people

1. Being away from friends and family for weeks/months at a time make it all about being independent and doing things on your own. You don't have that support system there in front of you anymore. My parents dragged me to church half the time. So a big reason I struggled with my faith was because I had to really rely on my own here and I wasn't nearly strong as I thought I was.
2. I met a lot of great Christian people during my time here. I've also met a lot of great "Christian" people here. Like anywhere in the world, there's hypocrites and those who talk with no backing. I met a fair share of hypocrites here my freshman year and I got so tired of always seeing people claim to be solid followers of God and then swearing all the time, drinking, etc. It made me question why I was trying so hard and also what real faith was because I just wasn't really seeing it around me. I realized that a huge part of having a solid faith at school deals with your environment and who you're surrounded with the most. We can be so easily influenced by others.
3. Another big struggle for me was literally having time. Not all college students are busy all the time but the average are. I had no time to talk on the phone with my girlfriend, let alone spend an hour in the Bible. I was always doing homework and studying and working on something for school. By the end of the week I'd be dead tired and I just didn't have the energy to do anything else. Unfortunately, that included devotions, praying, and even going to church. A lot of people just choose different things over faith and building their spiritual life. Partying, hanging out with friends, playing video games, or even studying. Managing time correctly can be such a huge struggle and when not done right, our spiritual lives are normally the first to take the hit.
4. Finally, since parents aren't around to tell us what to do, we tend to get lazy. This ties into the previous one some, but a big thing I noticed around here at least is getting out of bed and just being lazy. Everyone stays up late during the week so they compensate by sleeping in on the weekends. Parents aren't here to drag us out of bed on Sunday's so we just sleep in. When you start skipping church every week, your faith starts to take a hit. I know because I've been there. It's still a struggle for me because I work every weekend and just want to sleep. So besides not making enough time for God and for our spiritual lives, we struggle with being lazy and taking initiative.

DATING and Money

1: Roommates. My first semester here at Cedarville, I had a roommate who came from an abusive family, was a cutter, anorexic, bulimic, and suicidal. Rooming her was extremely difficult. She made it very hard to trust that God wants the best for us and that all things work together for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28). Now I know that He did use that experience to teach me things, but it was difficult to see the big picture while going through it.

2: Being far away from home. I was one of those people who could not wait to leave home. However, especially with the roommate I had first semester freshman year, I soon realized that it is hard being this far away from home sometimes and not be able to escape the confines of campus. It was very hard not having the support of my family and life-long friends from home. I had no other choice but to rely on God. One thing that has been a huge blessing and help is my adopted family from church. Shawnee Hills Baptist has a ministry called Adopt-A-Student where church families "adopt" students. My church family lets me come over at least once a week for a home-cooked meal and some hangout time. They provide rides to and from the airport and are always there for me if I need them. It has been a huge blessing and I probably would not have come back if it weren't for this home away from home.

3: School. Schoolwork is very stressful. I've noticed that sometimes I am so consumed with studying that I forget about my personal devotions and time alone with God. While this is a struggle, I've realized how valuable my time is with God and I strive to make time for Him.

4: Friends. I've learned a lot of lessons about friends at school. People always say to guard your heart against those of the opposite sex so as to not get hurt, but no one ever told me to guard my heart against fellow girls. Last year I learned this lesson the hard way because I poured my heart and my time into a few people (one in particular) and she suddenly ended the friendship for no reason.

5: Dating. When I first came to college I felt a pressure to start dating because everyone else was doing it. With God's help I was able to wait, but it did make me doubt His plan.

6: Dorm drama. Sometimes it is very easy to be caught up in the drama that goes around the dorm and around campus. When you do become involved, it is easy to forget about God and what He does for us. People become so consumed with their problems and the problems of others that they tend to ignore God and not use the Bible and prayer for encouragement.

***Death of a Parent**

***Death of a Close Friend**

***Feeling of Loneliness**

Coming here, I was seriously considering to walk away. When I came here to Cedarville, I saw what I have seen through my former church-a lot of Criticism. People look at Christianity and see it as very critical. We criticize each other very harshly and seeing that in my unit led me to seriously consider just walking away. I confronted my RA and told him what I saw in Him and He was like. 'You are absolutely right.'

1. Relationships: I broke up with my boyfriend of a year the second week here...and he went here. I'm not over him. He's a wonderful man who loves the Lord with all of his heart. Even though I know that God wants us apart right now and I don't regret ending it, I'm hoping that we'll get back together...but that's a different story ;)

2. I did NOT transition very well. I hit a wall in about September or early October after all the newness wore off of being extremely homesick. This really surprised me, considering how ready I was to get out of my school. I LOVED my school, but I was ready for something new. I went to the same Christian school for 11 years and graduated with 37 kids. I wouldn't trade that for the world though and would actually give anything to go back for a day.

3. Friends: I know that people say you'll meet your life-long friends in college, but I don't think that's always true. I've had the same best friends since I was a toddler, and I will ALWAYS be best friends with them. I had a very rare high school experience in which I have a great group of girl friends that I know I will always be close to.

4. I was sick for a whole month with a sinus infection. Very frustrating.

5. The people here are good for the most part, but some things have bothered me. Of course, everywhere will have its pockets of people that I'm not a huge fan of. It bothers me how some people are just SO exclusive with their groups of friends. Also that people have their faces completely buried in their iPhones all the time. :) But I'll get off of my soap box on that one!

I think that a lack of accountability affects many new college students. For example, I have a friend who went to a college out of state where she did not know anyone and she has stopped going to church completely. At home she has accountability from friends and her family, but at school, she does not have any of these things and she has not sought out Christian friends.

I know that the biggest challenge to my faith was being away from my parents. College forces you to live independently and stand on your own beliefs. I feel as though if your Christian faith is dependent on your parents', it will fail once you get to college. I have Christian friends who go to secular schools who have it even tougher. The students there have apathetic attitudes and do nothing but party on the weekends. This would put an even greater challenge on your faith. For me, the biggest challenge was being away from my parents and church peers. I had no one to please anymore. I had no one that expected me to "act" Christian. I was able to make my own decisions. I struggled with this for a while and realized I didn't really have true faith in the first place. Following God was not a daily routine for me. It wasn't until I came to Cedarville that I really became rooted in God and His Word. I'm scared to think about where I would be spiritually if I had chosen a secular school.

This may seem obvious, but temptations and peer pressure can definitely lead people from faith. It all depends on the "friends" that people make while in college. There are people who will desire to do evil things in the sight of the Lord and request that people follow them, and they're reasoning would be "Oh, everyone is doing that!" But as you said today in chapel, that should be a reason for us to stay away. But, if we find a group of friends who know how to have fun while being faithful to God's commandments, than we would have less of a chance to do something sinful.

I pray that you write your article well, and have a blessed week!

Becoming too dependent on personal friendships/relationships instead of on God; allowing people to distract us.

It might not be the top reason, but I think a big reason that many college students fall away from their faith is simply apathy. It affects students at both secular and Christian schools. Our generation is one that is constantly stimulated by an endless variety of sources, and it seems like the result of that is to simply not care much about any of those sources. Specifically for students at Christian schools, they are repeatedly being exposed to faith-related material, and sadly might become numb to the wonder and power of the Gospel. Whether at a Christian or secular school, maintaining one's relationship with God takes work and starts with a personal desire to grow.

- 1. Geographical separation and limited communication with godly friends, mentors, and family members**
- 2. Lack of spiritual accountability regarding actions, words, thoughts, etc.**
- 3. Little or no behavioral expectations or standards in the immediate culture**

4. Introduction to new, appealing worldviews that are inconsistent with the Bible

5. Peer pressure to be involved in harmful behavior

6. Dealing with objections to Christianity from peers and professors

7. Finding time to read the Word and pray amid many activities and distractions

I would say the number one crisis of faith I went through happened because my entire support system was ripped from underneath my feet once I moved in to Cedarville. I live in Massachusetts, and you could say I'm the "pioneer" of my family. I didn't know a soul here in Ohio before coming here, and to be honest, I still don't really know a soul here. I'm used to being the so called "popular" one, though I hate the negative connotation that term has in my head. I have several close friends at home, or I thought I did until moving 600 miles away from them. Ties were slowly severed, and for some reason I wasn't making anymore at college. The first month of college went by fast and with a giant wave of new information. Needless to say, it was overwhelming. I didn't have much time to look around and see how lonely I really was...without a friend here, I went to my classes every day and hid in my dorm at night. I met one girl here, and we stuck together as each other's crutch. She became one of my best friends. My friendship with her sparked a few shallow acquaintances with other people, but at the end of the day she was all I really had. The turning point - that is, the point I was forced to realize my loneliness - was the day my uncle passed away from pancreatic cancer. He had fought all year, and for 2 miraculous weeks he was cancer free. For that short time he visited my family and watched my high school graduation. In those 14 days I fell in love with the man of God he became through his sickness, and allowed myself to plan years of future memories I was sure we'd share. But, as Job says in his book, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away." My uncle's cancer came back tenfold and on September 3 he met the Lord in Paradise, free of pain finally. I shared my hurt with my one friend here, and we became even closer from the pain; but, as I became closer to her I felt my life at home slipping away. Thanksgiving Break came and went, and going home didn't feel right....but coming back to college felt worse. At the point when I should have reached out to God, I reached out to the empty space around me - the space that should have been filled with friends, family, and comfort - I was alone. I should mention too that I have a car here on campus, and for the weekends that I had no plans I escaped to my mom's brother's house in Cincinnati to be with my Aunt, Uncle, and 2 young cousins. They understand me, they know me, and they love me. Being there gave me a sense of my old life back and it refreshed me in the times I could barely stand. On November 11 I received a letter from the MA RMV informing me of my license revocation for a speeding ticket I received on my way to college while still on my Junior Operator's License. Just when I thought I couldn't be more alone, my one venue of freedom and control was taken from me. I couldn't leave this place for a breath of air if I tried. At that point my one friend began to meet other people, spark new friendships, and fill her time with other plans while I focused on just trying to make it through the day without crying. I blamed myself for not being able to "find friends like the rest of the Freshman." Everywhere I looked people were in groups, my friends at other colleges told me about what an amazing time they were having, and my family continued to live how they always did without much communication with me. Meanwhile, all I wanted was my old life back. I wanted the life of constant plans, a big circle of friends, and a hopelessly optimistic view of the world again. That was gone, and there was no way to get it back. I prayed. I read my Bible. I searched for a church every Sunday. I paid attention in chapel and tried to learn what I could. But all I could feel was a vat of unanswered pleas, a chaotic life spinning out of my control, and no sense of what to do or where to go. Worse yet, I felt like Job without a cause; I read through his words, felt them penetrate my soul and explain what my mouth couldn't form words to describe...but what had I to complain about??? Was my family dead? No! Was I covered in sores and weeping out of relentless pain? No! Did I lose my home and every piece of my life I ever loved? NO! How do you cast a problem to the Lord when you have no problem to point to? My prayers were mostly silent; I would begin praying but end up just crying in front of God because all I knew was the misery I felt inside but hadn't any idea why. Months of misery became months of numbness. My cries were left unanswered, and my heart became more discouraged. I doubted God. I doubted the Church. I doubted prayer entirely. I never

gave them up, because somewhere in my soul I knew God would show Himself through eventually, but I stopped believing my actions could influence His involvement in my life. I gave up on everything and everyone, and resigned myself to lonely days and small conversations. I didn't want a friend, I wanted the Jesus I used to know so well. Neither came to me. My story is still happening. As I described it to my brother last night over the phone, I'm still in the black hole...but I can make out a very small light a few miles ahead of me. Please Dr. Brown, don't make the mistake of thinking I have come out of this mess. I'm still very much at the bottom of the well! But this past week God answered my prayers. He gave me a glimpse of an answer. Since my uncle's death, I've married myself to negativity. Optimism used to be a natural reflex for my heart, but now it has become corrupted by a spirit of pessimism. A combination of Satan and my fickle sin nature has allowed a small foothold of evil to spawn a stronghold around my heart. My crisis of faith, my doubt, my loneliness, my negativity, and my despair are only symptoms of the true issue at hand: I've forfeited the safety net Jesus Christ died to give me! Leaving for college forces you to be on your own - and I would venture to say most people did not spend enough time equipping their spirit to fight against the influence of skepticism and evil before they packed their bags and moved across the state, the country, or the world. I've come to learn that once you marry that spirit of iniquity (in my case the attitude of negativity and hopelessness) it takes a long time to divorce it. My brother gave me an analogy after my first relationship ended: once you begin devoting your time to someone it turns over an hour glass full of sand; however long it takes the sand to fall to the bottom, that's how long it will take for it return to how it once was....and then some. I think that analogy applies to any hardship, any sin, and any "black hole" you go through. However long you're in the middle of it, that's how long with will take for you to recover...and then some! But I take heart, knowing BY EXPERIENCE that my God has not forsaken me! I am NOT alone! I've started looking for all the promises God makes in the Bible, and I've started to begin to believe again that He keeps them all! Whether I "feel" like He's there, whether I "feel" like He's doing a new work in me or not, I KNOW He is! After all, what's a feeling anyway? If Job can feel all the pain and hurt in the world and still KNOW that "the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord," then SURELY I can know it too! If I could tell every Christian about to leave for college ONE thing it would be this: Everyone says to prepare yourself for a struggle your Freshman year. You've probably geared yourself up to not expect a ton of friends the first week. I challenge you to take that a step further. Prepare for the possibility of not making friends AT ALL your first year. Prepare to not find a church AT ALL your first year. Prepare to have your family distant and your friends farther away than you ever thought possible. Prepare to be told it's your fault! Prepare to be told you just aren't getting involved enough! How do you prepare? Make God your support system. Make God your plans. Make God your best friend. If you rely on anyone or anything except the One who knows you completely, you will find yourself utterly alone. If you're like me, and can be told something a thousand times but just won't believe it until you experience it yourself, you'll probably go through a crisis of faith similar to mine, but with different circumstances. Take heart! "My flesh may fail, but my God you NEVER will." Revisit His promises. Rebuild the faith you once had one stone at a time, this time making God the foundation, not what you were told by your church, your family, or your friends. And find out why people can sing songs like "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and mean it!

In my situation it was a few things that challenged me. First was just the 'culture shock' of moving away from home and not knowing anyone. I was so challenged in my faith at that time, especially since I didn't have a church 'home' all of first semester. Another thing that challenged me was the plethora of different beliefs that came from my peers. I remember sitting in CLT really being challenged to make my faith my own after participating in some discussions. I think another thing for me was just the whole church/finding a church/getting involved ordeal. It's hard to connect and settle in to a place when you know that you are just going to be leaving at the end of 4 years and during breaks, etc. It's also extremely discouraging to church hunt and after a while, you can almost find yourself being okay with not finding a church, which of course is extremely unhealthy to your faith. We need our brothers and sisters! I've been extremely blessed to be a part of Apex for all of my years here and involved in a house church with them for 3 1/2 years. I'm also teaching

Sunday School in Xenia now. It did take a while to break down that barrier, though...it's tempting to not get involved when you know its only temporary. I think something that churches around college towns can do is just really be intentional with students--maybe Adopt a student ministries, fairs (like our involvement fair), etc. just to encourage student involvement and connection to a local body. I know being involved has been a HUGE blessing in my life.

I think a HUGE one is peer pressure. If students are going to a secular school especially, they are more likely to participate in partying behaviors (getting drunk, drug experimentation, etc.)

Another would be not having the accountability of your parents making you go to church. There's no one standing over you on Sunday morning making you get up and get ready.

Also, relationships are totally changing. For me, I was grieving a break-up coming here freshman year, and honestly, if I had gone to OSU (like I had planned on), I would have turned to some partying to dull that pain. Some people don't go through that, but your comfortable friendships are changing.

The last one I can think of off the top of my head is that college brings huge responsibility. All of the sudden, you're dropped into the adult world. Being an adult brings all kinds of new challenges and responsibilities including finding your identity. If you have defined yourself by the "Good Christian Girl/Boy IMAGE" rather than a relationship with Christ, when things get rough you have nothing to fall back on. When you come to college, you're developing a whole new image - these people don't know you at all. So, when you have defined yourself by what the Christian population says you should be, then....what's left when that's ripped from beneath you?

- 1. Curiosity about the world in a vacuum of spiritual support***
- 2. The idea that there will be no consequences followed by a guilt that you had "crossed over" and were now one of "the sinners."***
- 3. Watching all of your peers deal with their rigorous academic stress in all the wrong ways and having none of your usual methods available (family, church family).***
- 4. Being in a personal crisis, and the only people available to come beside you and support you are all well meaning worldlings.***
- 5. Being constantly bombarded by evolution and humanism by kind, brilliant and well meaning professors who you would feel too dumb to argue with on an academic level.***
- 6. A reaction of shock and horror by your original faith family back home when the pressure gets to you and you mess up...the only people to turn back to are your party friends.***
- 7. Seeing so many new and potentially valid ways of "doing life" and wondering why you have to have the right way.***
- 8. Primarily relying on public worship and Christian fellowship to encourage you in the faith, my prayer life was not what it should of been going into the world, and neither were my personal devotions...I had never needed that personal spiritual formation before because I had so much support back home.***
- 9. A fear of loneliness in a worldly environment.***
- 10. The feeling of immediate in the moment satisfaction that sometimes accompanies sinful behavior.***

I would say that for me, the most challenging thing about faith during college is the competition between church and schoolwork. In general, I think that many fall away because they did not know why they believed what they believed, and so, we swept away by the mainstream.

One of the biggest challenges that I have experienced and seen in many of my friends is dealing with the changes (both good and bad) that happen at home. Many students really struggle with not being able to see their siblings grow up, parents going through an unexpected divorce, or having a family member suddenly becoming ill. The worst part about these situations is that students are expected to continue living a "normal"

life at college and really almost act as if nothing happened. Students feel helpless and most likely develop a poor understanding of the reality of the situation.

I think the biggest area is not feeling strongly connected to a community-oriented local church, or not knowing how to find that. When students give up on finding this or don't look for it, their spiritual growth just languishes. Finding a church like this was the biggest "anchor for my soul" during my years at Cedarville. (I am a senior now.) Classes like Old Testament with Miller were a huge part of what spurred the hunger and search for that kind of growth---but ultimately a very close-knit, Christ-centered, prayerful church was what I needed---and what God provided for me. So many Cedarville students do not have that, and my heart breaks for them. Finding a church apart from Mom and Dad is the first major way we start to own up to our own faith. How much importance we place on that is a big signal for how much we value our faith in general. But others that do value their faith simply give up on finding a good church because it seems so hard, or because we are disillusioned. Often times college students just find out Jesus really is about wholehearted surrender and they finally accept they just aren't ready for that, so they give up completely. It's the saddest thing.

Other ideas...

Hanging out with lukewarm friends

Looking to problems in the church (hypocrisy, etc.) instead of looking to Jesus

Lack of authority / mentorship (not always ready for transition with so much liberty and no authority)

Sexual temptation

Distractions (Facebook, media, video games, etc.)

Wanting to be like the mainstream culture vs. being set apart / holy

Not knowing how to pray / not seeing examples of people in constant intimate communication with God and praying over each other and seeing God work

I think the biggest challenge I've seen for my friends' faith as they've transitioned to college has been having more freedom to make their own choices. For some students who come from Christian homes, making right decisions was something they did because it was what was expected of them, or they made "good" choices out of habit, not because they truly believed that they were doing what they should be doing. Since, at home, they didn't have as much freedom to make choices as they do now that they are an adult, they weren't really sure what they believed, and it has been hard for some of them to decide what values they truly want to hold on to.

I believe the biggest problem is "inheriting" a faith without questioning it. I am a Christian, and there are many times where I take a certain stance on an issue just because my parents do or my church does (women in the pastorate, predestination, and eternal security for example). I didn't really dig into the Word or investigate further for why they believed. It has been a challenge for me because I get caught up in these debates and miss the forest for the tree.

I think that one of the biggest things for Christians that have grown up in a Christian home or even not, is just the fact that they have the freedom to make their own choices, and try things that they have never been able to before. Especially in secular campus', it's easy to put the faith on the back burner so they can try out new things because they know that God will always be there to forgive them.

Personally, I have struggled with the general idea of sin and the evil that results from it. As a child you are sheltered and think of good and evil like a Disney movie, and know that in the end good will always prevail. But, as you get older you see things like the Holocaust and the lives tormented and lost in that tragedy alone and wonder: why did it take so long for the good to step up in that situation?

Sin is the root of the challenges I have faced, and continue to face. Child soldiers, world hunger, genocide, and the greed of our society are the things that break my heart and sometimes cause me to question, not so much my faith, but where our world is heading and how far we will continue to fall before our eternal redemption. But, like Anne Frank, I still continue to believe that people are good at heart. Through all of the ugly and dark shadows of this world my faith is restored when I see a baby smile, or hear of someone putting their life in harm's way for the life of another. We may be a fallen humanity, but there is still hope for humanity, and that hope is Christ. That is what keeps my faith anchored.

I am a sophomore and I know that for myself there are two main things that I have realized in my first year and a half in college. The first thing that I have realized is that I feel that I have less expectations to hold to my faith. Growing up I had Christian parents, Sunday school teachers and even high school teachers. I think that while I was growing up I kept my faith so well because it was easy and expected of me. Being distanced from those influences has made me realize that I am no longer expected to believe certain things and if I want to believe such things it has to be because I choose to.

A second thing that I feel has affected my faith is the people I am surrounded by. Being a college student, 98% of the people I am surrounded by are 18-22 year-olds. People of my age are not as rooted in their beliefs, so therefore they are not as good as helping others root themselves in their faith. Furthermore I think that people of my age are very hesitant to point out major flaws in other people. Between these two things, and other factors I have yet to identify, I personally have had some wavering in my own faith. I think that this has been good for me, though, so that now I can choose to believe things for the right reasons.

-Strong desire to sleep instead of attend church, pray, attend Bible studies, etc (as a result of a large workload, stress, and a busy schedule)

-Difficulty in finding a church that you "like" (ie. where you feel comfortable and accepted yet challenged in one's faith)

-Peer pressure -no matter how strict the rules, there will always be students breaking them and others will be influenced by the actions of those students.

-Desire for independence and self-sufficiency; when striving to feel independent and have parents and friends also view you as independent, it can be difficult to remain humble enough to be leaning on God

-Fear of standing out and being seen as out of the ordinary (it's easier and there is less pressure if you just do the ordinary and fit in versus doing great things and working hard and risking loneliness and being ostracized).

-Stress of school coupled with pain and grief from events back home. It's incredibly difficult to be away from home when tragedy and hardship are going on there.

To me, apathy is the biggest struggle that I face when it comes to my being a Christian in college. The easy thing is almost never the right thing. For instance, it's so easy to sleep instead of going to church, and it's easy to skip my Bible reading in favor of getting more homework done. As people, I think that apathy is our natural response, but we have to make a conscious effort to abide by the values that we know to be right in order to overcome it.

One thing that I find hard is that your parents aren't here to make you go to church, so just potentially missing out on the community and faith-building that comes with going to church.

I am so glad you asked! Since coming to college I have faced a couple troubling questions as it relates to faith. It was mostly during in the second half of freshman year and into this year that I've struggled with the topic of suffering in the world. It just doesn't seem logical that God could love us and allow us to suffer mental illnesses, crippling physical deformities, starvation, or even heartbreak. That overarching question has led to doubts

about God's personal love for each one of us, to question how God could allow Hell to exist, and to doubt the relevance of this ancient text today. I'm not really sure if those are typical doubts to have, but I have that helps with your article.

I think a big one is that colleges say that "science" has discredited the Bible, Christianity, or God. As well, another big challenge is that students get caught up in lifestyles and activities that are anti-gospel. They see the fun that's available, and they see it as a break from the rules that they started in.

A solution to the first is to instruct students about what science actually is, and to teach them about paradigms, worldviews, and preconceptions. A solution to the second is to get churches, youth groups, and families more serious about their students'/children's faith. Parents and churches impose rules on kids hoping that they change them.

One challenge is the overwhelming feeling of everyone else's different beliefs. The thought is "How do I know which one is right?" Instead of seeking the truth, some students will give up in frustration and walk away. This is very likely especially when the beliefs are so different, and yet make sense (at least in the way they are portrayed.)

#1: Relationships

Relationships are definitely the number one challenge to faith in college. And by relationships, I am referring to guy-girl interactions. At Christian college, the possibility exists that one will meet their future spouse at college, therefore it can be easy to spend one's thoughts on members, or one member in particular, of the opposite sex. Time spent with members of the opposite sex is enjoyable, but once the limited time of personal interaction is over, one may already be looking forward to the next time the group gets together. For girls, thinking so much about guys, or vice versa, can become a hindrance to one's focus in academics, as well as prayer life. One special person can become an idol. While I cannot speak from experience about secular universities, the media relays plenty of stories about unhealthy relationships between male and female students, involving many other negative aspects that are not as relevant at a Christian college, including alcohol, parties, and other tempting situations.

#2. Professors

At Cedarville, thankfully, professors encourage students to grow in their faith. However, at secular schools, students may be led astray by eloquent professors whose intelligence and authority is seems untouchable and irrefutable. College students' minds are like sponges, not to be cliché; at this age, individuals want to learn, and embrace "new" knowledge, when it is presented in a sophisticated argument. Secular professors who connect to students (the "cool" teachers)

Complacency, Conformity

1. For me it was a huge struggle the beginning of my freshman year to be alone and therefore have personal devotions. Being new to college and wanting to make friends, I felt I constantly had to be with people and was afraid of missing out on things. If I spent time by myself in my room, I would think that there must be something going on somewhere else and I was missing out on it.
2. Seeing upperclassmen who appeared to "have it all together" and felt that I could never live up to it. I felt very spiritually immature when I came to CU and it would have been easy to just sit back and let all the other great spiritual leaders do everything.
3. Being bombarded with lots of different ideas and decisions about your faith. I felt that I had no precise theological viewpoint and with all the conflicting ideas milling about, it was hard to figure out the truth by myself.

4. No one knows you and therefore they don't have expectations for you. If you were the good Christian girl back home, freshman year comes and you can be anyone you want.
5. I have a friend at an art school (Rhode Island School of Design) and she has found the main struggle to be just to find fellow believers who want to go to church on Sunday mornings.

Overwhelmed with school work

1. Trouble and discouragement when looking for a new church.
2. Trouble with not putting a textbook before the bible.

---Non-Christian friends/roommates can influence you to spend less time reading the Bible and in church (this challenge could be met by finding a Christian roommate and making sure to meet other Christians to meet with to have Bible study/praise time)

---Being on your own for the first time can cause temptation to skip church more often to work on schoolwork/spend time with friends (this challenge could be met by finding someone to hold you accountable to attend church)

---In college, people are more likely to watch television/read things/listen to music that are more violent/sexual/profane than what they would watch/read/listen to in high school (this challenge could be met by talking to more mature Christians about their opinions about these things before deciding what parts of popular culture to become involved in)

---More stress can cause people to handle bad situations in a negative way, possibly causing them to accuse God of not caring (this challenge can be met by praying and finding good ways to deal with stress such as regular exercise and avoiding procrastination)

At the beginning of last semester I was with a group of kids and we were just talking about things that Mike Yankoski had talked about when he spoke, and one kid asked the question: Why do you believe what you believe?

I had honestly never thought about that question, or how I would answer it. Unlike in the past, I wanted to answer this question, I didn't want to just move on without thinking about it...and naturally this question led to many many others. This past year has been the most continuously frustrating time I can ever remember experiencing, concerning my faith...

I think that the temptation to become apathetic is a huge challenge to our faith. When we are outside of our parents' influence, we can talk ourselves out of consistently attending church or doing our devotions or making a conscious effort of growing closer to God. We do not begin with that intention to fall away, but other things begin to take the place of God in our lives without us knowing it. We become apathetic regarding our spiritual life. Apathy targets us in two different ways, one at a secular college, one at Christian colleges. At a secular college, you get the peer pressure to conform and leave your spiritual life behind. It is more of a direct challenge. At Christian colleges, we get a daily dose of Christianity with chapels, Bible classes and fellow Christian friends. We start to replace personal growing times (devotions) with chapel and Bible classes. This leads to a weaker faith more easily cast off at a later time

Struggling being alone for a while. Making friends takes a lot of time and effort.

For me, finding a good home church (away from home) has been a real struggle. It's a handful of things but the alienation and alone-ness I feel when I'm so used to my home church where I know everyone is discouraging. That's my personal faith struggle in college.

1. Philosophy classes
2. Influence of professors who press anti-Christian beliefs on their students (e.g. during study-abroad experiences)

They've faced too much pressure during their pre-college years to go to church. One of my friends left Cedarville after her first semester because she basically decided that she wasn't a Christian and couldn't exist in the CU environment. She grew up going to church but didn't find the Christians she knew to be at her level intellectually (she's brilliant). I think part of that was because she saw so much hypocrisy in the church. She saw a disconnect between the love Christians proclaimed and the alienation followers of Christ dished out to peoples of other religions.

-Lack of time and support. New college students suddenly have either way over-loaded schedules full of socializing and studying or such lax schedules that discipline is thrown out the window. Instead of pouring into Scripture, they dive into extracurricular activities or video games. They don't cultivate any spiritual growth already there, and it therefore is choked out. I feel like college students these days have little time to think, either because they're padding their future resume and never rest, or because they're lethargic and let their brains turn to mush on Facebook and video games.

One challenge: How can people who claim to have encountered God be so...disappointing? The American church is one of the most depressing things I've ever seen. I want to believe so much, but there is very little evidence of people actually living out the life of Jesus. Logical conclusions: either they haven't encountered God, or there is no God to be encountered.

Another: How can these people say their hope of salvation is in Jesus Christ and following Him, when their lives reflect little to no evidence of following Jesus' words? If you look at the actual teachings of Jesus and line them up with our churches...I see little resemblance.

Note: this includes the faithful members at church every Sunday, who tithe and have perfect marriages and teach Sunday school. I long to see people *radically* changed by what they claim they believe...because if what they say they believe is TRUE...they would have to be radically changed. Why don't I see it?

That I won't really experience what life is cause I feel like I have to had been there to know what its all about.

I think for me one of the biggest things that I found involved with my faith was that it was now completely up to me. Growing up in a Christian home I always went to church on Sundays (morning and night) and on Wednesdays. It became routine. Coming to College that routine was thrown out and a new one needed to be put in. I knew that I WANTED to go to church. I WANTED to keep my relationship with God where it was and grow in it as well, but I didn't have my parents there to make sure that I went to church and was still active. It was now my responsibility. For me that was something that hit even before coming here. I was checking out churches online and listening to sermons. I now had a decision that I could make on my own and didn't want my relationship with God suffering any. I wanted to grow in His word. That was one that might have tested my faith in my fear of it being all on me now. I'm glad to say I have a church that I am extremely active in. I love it and the people there and now more than ever I feel that my relationship with God is so much closer.

Although I grew up in a strong Christian home with a strong faith, the greatest challenge to my faith was realizing the incredible implications that living a faithful Christ-honoring life would have on me and my future. In high school being a Christian may have meant simple sacrifices like being judged or ridiculed by other

students or teachers. However, once in college I realized that my Christian faith may actually negatively impact my reputation and success as a scientist or business person. The reputation of Christians in some circles is synonymous with the reputation of those who believe in UFOs and paranormal activity. Basically, in college the stakes are much higher. I didn't want to commit my life to following Christ if I was not absolutely sure that it was something I would die for. I needed to make sure I hadn't just been "brainwashed" during my childhood and that what I believed about God and reality was indeed truth.

- Independence (first time making your own decisions and freedom to do as you choose)
- Busyness (thinking you have "too much" to do to go to church or to read your Bible)
- Alcohol (I feel like this one is pretty obvious)
- Standards of others (the world expects us to be like everyone else, and it is difficult to stand up when it feels like you are all alone)
- Spheres of influence (the people you spend your days with may or may not be Christ-followers, and may be pulling you away from your walk with God, whether it be consciously or unconsciously)

This may not be exactly what you're looking for, but I honestly believe alcohol is one of the biggest (perhaps the biggest) reason why young people walk away from God. I went to a small, liberal arts college and served in many leadership roles while there. Because of that, I interacted with most of the first-year students as they became acclimated to the school. For three years, I would share my faith with incoming freshmen and there were so many that would open up to me about their faith. I can think of dozens of students who told me they were Christians, they refused to drink alcohol, they refused to party, they refused to get involved in unhealthy physical relationships, and by the second semester of their freshmen year, they were in the party-scene, living very promiscuous lives and having some of the worst reputations on our campus. From my knowledge, most of these students would start going to parties (without drinking), eventually have 1 or 2 drinks at a party, eventually decide to join a fraternity or sorority, and then eventually allow alcohol to be a central part of their lives.

So your question is really hard to answer but I think one of the biggest challenges is finding a really solid group of friends. The verse in 1 Corinthians 15:33 is so true that we must guard who we interact with and what kind of influence they will be to our character. So the challenge is finding these people. It is especially difficult because people are always changing and growing especially in college.

This may not be helpful but I figured I'd share personal experience. I know for me (and many of my friends) it is hard to be actively seeking Christ and a relationship with Him above everything else (good grades, future spouses, sports, orgs etc etc.) I honestly do enjoy chapel. I love singing with my friends and feeling the entire DMC filled with my peers worshipping. But when forced to do anything, you begin to resent it. That is just how my bratty generation is. I think if we chose to go to chapel that many would and that forcing us to go daily only makes us have resentful hearts and lead to us not absorbing the speakers message. another thing you have is a lot of people sleeping or studying or texting. If chapel was optional or we had to go less days then I truly believe more people would be seeking out personal relationships. Another thing I have personally struggled with (and heard of many people my age) is blaming God for life not being perfect. Studying hard for an exam and praying and then failing and saying why God? Or not making friends as quickly as you wanted too or finding a spouse and wondering why God hasn't brought anyone into your life. Another big obstacle is when you get educated incorrectly and start to question your own beliefs instead of just accepting what your parents told you.

First of all, being stripped away from all your known means of safety at the same time is very difficult to describe...I mean you have to leave your parents and make your own decisions (some are ready for and others are not)...you have to make all new friends...and live with people you don't know. All while trying to get good grades and maintain a relationship with Christ. He is the only stable relationship, but when everything else seems so unstable it makes sense to forget how to approach Christ.

Faith must now become your own. So many people I have met here were not prepared for the world by their parental units. Many were so strict that the students have no idea how to think without them, so they call them many times a day or just rebel.

It is so easy to fake it to make it at a "Christian" University. If you grew up knowing all the right answer to say it is so easy to slip through the cracks and go unnoticed. Going to church and chapel means nothing in regards to a relationship with Christ

The biggest struggle has been having no place or role within the church. Being a college student and going to church is completely different than attending church as a teenager or even as an adult. When I attend a church around Cedarville, I feel as though I have lost my identity because I am clumped as a college student. I do not seem to have a vital, or even necessary role in any of the churches that I have attended in my three years here. For this reason, attending church each week becomes increasingly more difficult as I continually realize that I am just another face that will be passing through, and that I will continue to be so till I graduate and become an "adult."

The most common complaint I've heard since coming to college (and one I have myself) is that the new and developing relationship one has with their parents is quite complicated. Since most students still receive some financial support from one/both parents, there is still the need to request their approval for things. But at the same time, we're suppose to be making our own life choices based on everything our parents have taught us. Understandably so, it's hard for parents to let go and trust that they've done enough for us. So how do we begin to take over control of our lives, while still honoring them and respecting their authority? Also, since Cedarville is Christ-centered and everyone coming here has struggles that they deal with, most people have put them off with the internal promise of dealing with it while at school. While this environment is usually the perfect place for people to let guards down and be open (sometimes for the first time ever) it needs to be supported by strong mentoring/counseling services. I'm NOT saying that the programs the CU currently offers in those areas are bad, it's just simply not enough. I know that Counseling Services are having to make people wait longer and longer, and there aren't enough mentors to suffice. More emphasis in these areas is essential to continuing growth while here at CU and afterwards.

- 1. Apathy--In the college environment, even one as Biblically sound as Cedarville, apathy can easily creep into one's life. Often Cedarville students grow up in a Christian home and solid church, where constant accountability with family and church family help fight against apathy, but many students lack that same support and encouragement at college and let "busyness" become their excuse for apathetic faith.***
- 2. One big challenge for me has been the diversity of viewpoints within Christianity that I have been exposed to at college. Having been raised in a fairly Conservative home, I had never considered how following Christ could look so different amongst different denominations and viewpoints. This seeming incongruence between sects of Christ followers can lead to confusion and frustration in college students, sometimes driving them away from their faith.***
- 3. Many times the issue is that a students' "faith" was not really her faith to begin with. Many college students mistake adherence to parents' lifestyle or teaching as true Christian faith. Since these students were never grounded in their faith when they left for college, they simply turn away from Christ once the influences of parents and home church members have diminished.***

First, making your faith and beliefs your own. One of the biggest challenges I had when coming to CU was making my faith my own. Before, I just believed whatever my parents believed. Now, I know why I believe, and what I believe.

Second, living out what you believe. It is so easy to live in your household and follow what your parents do. Now that I'm at CU, it is now completely my decision what I choose to do. This has made me even more firm of what I believe and my walk with Christ.

Third, to be a light and an example to those around you. It is so easy to get caught up in the autonomy in your friends. It's much harder to stand for what the Bible teaches. This hasn't been much of an issue at CU, but I can definitely see this being an issue at a secular university.

Ways to meet these challenges:

1. Servant Evangelism: This idea would be more for a secular university, and in response to the third challenge. I think that if you actively partake in servant evangelism on a campus, it demonstrates to your friends that you truly believe what you believe. By serving other students, it helps deface the "judgmental" persona that many students hold against Christians. It also shows that you care, and that you are genuine in what you believe.

2. Be a part of a community ministry. I think it is very important to be a part of a Bible study with other believers. It is a safe group that can come alongside you through the difficult times of college. It also will help strengthen you and others as you are trying to mature as a Christian.

1. Freedom to make my own decisions. Where before many of my choices were guided by my parents, now I am seemingly only accountable to myself.

2. Busier lifestyle. With more filling up my day, finding time to spend in prayer and reading the Bible is harder than before.

3. Lack of fellowship at church. Finding a new church is easy but becoming a part of it is not. To attend once a week is one thing, but to get to know the people in it is difficult. I think that accountability and godly fellowship is what many are lacking. To make up for that colleges should encourage community among their students to allow this to happen. Being accountable to some online checklist is not going to work. Only a person-to-person relationship creates the needed atmosphere to be open.

1. First time, many times, on their own and students tend to feel like their parents have controlled their life.

2. Lots of new challenges/temptations that weren't there previously to college. I've observed that many times parents are too busy holding on to their kids as they're growing older rather than teaching them how to address the problems. Or parents don't talk about tough issues at all (sex).

3. Questioning their faith is huge... "Why do I believe in God?"

One attack that I think is often leveled at Christianity is the simple fact that it cannot be proven. We cannot absolutely verify our beliefs so why do we believe? I believe that this attack should not be overly potent, but it is due to many Christians inaccurate belief that their faith can be logically proven to be the correct faith and their belief that all other faiths are irrational. Through a correct understanding of certainty and faith (Kierkegaard presented these topics very well), Christians can find a better starting point for an examination of belief systems.

Also, I believe that many Christians have a difficult time when they are exposed to the many religions of the world. How can I place my life (and my eternity) in the hands of a God who most of the world does not acknowledge? One remedy to this predicament is to strive after Jesus with one's whole heart and to examine the lives of people who have lived wholeheartedly for God. Are there non-natural occurrences in their lives and in my life that would allude to supernatural activity? Also, we should examine the historicity of our faith and of other religions. Through these tests, I believe that many believers will gain a greater confidence in their faith.

#1: Loneliness in a crowd (or being different from the majority in opinions)

I think personality can play a huge part in this. For the person who has high self-esteem, this process of starting a new life and entering the phase of 'independence' is easier than for others. Yet most people struggle to come from the comforts of home, family & friends to a place where they are essentially starting over again. In some aspects being in a Christian school can bring even more isolation if you don't come from the same denomination as the majority of other students - although I personally have found I'm more isolated when it comes to political views than to theological views. (Cedarville doesn't advertise itself as Republican, but it seems to demonstrate a strong allegiance to the GOP).

#2: Failed expectations

When you get the acceptance letter from a Christian college, you believe that they really did pick you because of your background, your testimony, your openness and friendliness with your assigned Admissions counselor and okay, perhaps because of your SAT scores. Yet arriving on campus, there is an onslaught of generic information, generalized statements and very few experiences of a personal touch. Five weeks into classes and the new student will not have heard any further news from their Admissions counselor and they are effectively left to find their place in this new world of the college campus. If you're lucky, you've come to the same college as some of your friends from back home, but for many, it's a brand new start and you're left to do it on your own. The personal touch is lost and you quickly become a statistic. Unless you are the kind of person who participates in class discussions, asserts yourself to go sign up for discipleship groups or has the confidence to ask for help....you're likely to start floundering in your self-confidence and a knock to your faith could come pretty swiftly. A problem with finances, an ill family member back home, or a friendship that dissolves - and suddenly you're sinking with no-one who knows you beyond the fact that you're another student who's hit a crisis.

#3: Dedication to education

The most common phrase I heard through the first semester of college was "You're not in High School anymore". For me as an international & non-traditional student (aged 25 when I started), that was obvious. Yet there were only two people who took the time to help me understand how to balance all the demands of school with my life. In each case they actually explained that there would be points on this journey when I would have to decide to give up certain things in favor of my studies. I'm so grateful for the "Foundations" class that does a practical exercise on this, demonstrating that college can be done well if it's handled correctly. However, when school became too much, and I was one of the unfortunates to be "lost in a crowd of students" - the easiest thing to give up (in order to gain more school time and me time) was going to church. Everyone at church said "we understand, you're a student - sometimes there's just too much to do". And fellow college students would commiserate and echo that they'd missed many opportunities of Christian fellowship because they were either studying, doing assignments or recovering from a week of school work.

#4: Perspectives on establishing independence

When you start college, so many people tell you different stories; some emphasize that this is "the time of your life" and others emphasize "this is the time when you'll change as a person" or even others emphasize that "this is the beginning of the rest of your life". This can ultimately come down to the other students in your college; will college be the last party before you *have* to become independent or will it be the first steps of becoming independent. What unfortunately many students I know don't realize is that essentially there is no choice:- College IS the first steps of independence. If you don't pay attention as a student, you'll likely find yourself caught out with either a degree you don't want, a debt you can't afford or a GPA you can't get a job with. What's unfortunate is that not many colleges have the resources to help students who have realized this or who realize in their first year that they're already on this life journey. Few college Financial Aid departments have the capacity to counsel students each year as they take on loans (wouldn't it be great to check that each student is aware what their financial status is and what that means in terms of their faith, worldview and personal goals?) ... these two I think apply specifically to Cedarville

#5: Few resources or preparations for spiritual attacks

In the last two years, I have had four members of my family pass away - one of whom was my Dad. I know a girl who had two relatives commit suicide during her first year at school. I know a girl (at another US Christian college) who's parents died after dropping her off at college. I have heard countless stories on our campus of parents/siblings being in car accidents, family being diagnosed with chronic diseases, parents getting divorced or some sort of real-life crisis.

Even the person with the strongest kind of faith, when faced with these problems will be devastated and look for resources to equip themselves ---but add to these issues, the loneliness, dedication to studies, feelings of being let down and questions about independence...and you'll have a Christian lying on injured and weary the ground, their spiritual armor scattered around and out of reach, and a thousand questions.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:

For me personally, being able to speak with a philosophy professor, a couple ladies at The Cove and some non-Cedarville University people---I felt that brought me back from the brink of giving up on my faith. However the issue is not 'are there people willing to help' but rather what preventative measures the student body can establish to prepare for standing in unity and as soldiers together.

While I appreciate and value the emphasis on Mission Trips, Praise Chapel and various small groups--one thing I have yet to see a Christian college do is ACTIVELY PREEMPT the spiritual attacks. It would not take much to provide booklets (or perhaps to even produce these 'in house' by collaborating with faculty in Philosophy, Theology, Psychology, Biology, Nursing etc) to students about life issues (eg: Bereavement Booklet: a short explanation on some philosophical questions and how to articulate them, some comments on the psychological process of grief, some help on the physiological signs that the grief is causing a high level of stress and then perhaps a Student Life comment on where Students can get help or find more resources). What a booklet like this would do is equip students to help each-other. The most common response I've heard from people who know someone struggling is "I don't know how to help them so am praying for them" - whilst prayer is critical, so is practical help and having a friend to come along side to share the burden. Such resources for students would take steps towards establishing a student body that can support each other. While we have a counseling service and the Cove do a spectacular job of supporting students; there are not enough counselors to deal with all those who need help...and not everyone is comfortable asking for "professional help".

Probably one of the biggest challenges to the faith of a college student is dogmatic professors. Professors who don't believe in God, or even professors that are of different denominations and refuse to tolerate students' beliefs as viable, are enough to destroy a student's faith. Each professor has control over students for several hours each week. Over the course of the semester, the professor could easily convince students of even the most ridiculous ideas simply through continuously saying that something is true. If students hear something enough, they will start to believe it. The best way to overcome this is to find other students in a similar situation. Chances are that there are other students that have that professor who are also struggling. Find them. Fellowship with people who are or who have gone through similar situations; it is an incredible help.

- Being uprooted from my church to go to a school far away.
- Being Semi disconnected from Godly Friends and Family because of distance
- Finding a Church At the School
- Feeling of Being Lost:

In high school you look forward to college and I felt like my life was figured out, but now I don't know where I want to go or what I'm going to do after Cedarville. I knew my role, job, position, friends, and purpose but now I feel that College you have to start over again. To some it's a fresh start but to me it is very troublesome. As time goes on I feel less and less lost and more and more of the pieces to the puzzle are falling into place. But overall I think that this was my largest challenge and Greatest Fear of being lost.

It's not that same as being lost because I was without Christ or that I needed Christ. I knew and know he is there through this whole process but the feeling of not having a goal really put me in a tailspin. So many things asked for my help or participation and not knowing how to decide what to choose or follow was hard. All I can say is it takes prayer and a Godly leader or mentor to steer you in the right direction. That's what it took for me.

- 1. Many non-religious people seem more real than many religious people, more genuine.**
- 2. Many Christians can be ignorant, and live a Christian subculture life sheltered from really engaging in ideas outside of themselves, and thus are looked down upon by the general culture. Young people leave the faith because they don't want to be seen as idiots.**
- 3. Many young Christians haven't really experienced what they are told they will experience. They are told they will get fulfilled and they don't feel it.**

The biggest problem that I have faced thus far is dealing with tragedy. A few weeks ago one of my friends from back home committed suicide and it completely destroyed me. I didn't know how to react to the issue as I didn't have any of the people I ordinarily would have gone to such as my parents or close friends. I was stuck facing it on my own. I felt completely alone and depressed. It caused me to question everything that I believed and I haven't spent any time in prayer or reading the Bible until a week ago. This was something I never thought would happen because I have been raised with a firm foundation in Christianity and am a Youth Ministry major. But you really don't know how entirely devastating tragedy like this is until you experience it.

- 1. The tendency to focus too much on building human friendships at college can often replace the emphasis on my relationship with God.**
- 2. It's easy to allow chapel and Bible classes to substitute for my personal seeking after God.**
Those are the two big ones for me!

Well, I might have a bit of a special case (I'm still attending my home church, living with my family, and going to a Christian college), but I can give you my input. My trouble tends to come when I hear about how everyone else went to camp and rededicated their lives to God, walked away from God in their teen years, etc. I'm not saying anyone should stop saying this; but when I hear about this sort of thing, I wonder if I really believe in God. I have a hard time remembering that just because I have believed something to be absolutely true since before I can remember, doesn't mean I have to question that belief now. I guess it would be helpful not only to remind those with more troubled faith that God still loves them, but also to remind those who grew up in the church and have little or no memory of their actual salvation experience that just because you've always believed something and can't point to a date doesn't mean you don't have faith. Then my other comment isn't exactly a deterrent to faith, but it is to worship. I'm tired of being told that if I don't jump up and down, or scream, or wave my hands in the air, or clap in a certain way, that I'm not really worshipping God. I'd like to see "recognition of different styles of worship" include the quieter types as well as the louder types.

- 1. Hip hop/popular music of today, as well as movies slowly change your worldview**
- 2. It feels like almost everyone you know, surprisingly even your close Christian friends, try alcohol, hookah, clubbing, or partying, giving them a new worldview as well.**
- 3. You are able to make your own decisions now and your parents do not have as close of tabs on you**
- 4. These three combined can cause you to choose to hang out with people or at places where there is alcohol and drugs or just around people who have a different worldview**
- 5. These people and things seem more exciting than going to church**
- 6. It is easier to skip church with the new freedom that you have from your parents**
- 7. Instead, you spend time around students who are not a positive influence**

- 8. You fill your mind with this music, tv shows and movies, and what these friends post on social media, because it's a lot easier and more "hip and fun" than what the Bible says, plus it takes more work to do devotions than to just slide into this (especially when it seems like you are the only one doing them anymore).**
- 9. In your college classes, you interact a great deal with professors and students who are open and totally okay with not believing in God or holding a very different view of him. You become friends with them, and over time, that seems normal to you. You accept that it is okay for them to believe that, even though you never thought that you would accept such views as normal. You get into deep conversations with people of other faiths and realize that they have valid points for backing up what they believe. You don't feel like you have any more answers than they do. You find out that they claim to have peace from their religion too.**
- 10. Your professors teach you things that challenge your faith. Even at Cedarville in our Bible classes, we discuss questions that students have never wrestled with and didn't think they were allowed to wrestle with. (For example: free will/determinism, homosexuality, if God created the earth from a chaos/something that already existed) Also, as you dive into issues of pain and who God really is, other questions come up and when there are no answers that seem to be available, you start to question everything. All of this makes you apathetic as well. It's a slow fade and eventually, you question everything, deciding that God is no longer as present or important as your parents always taught you.**

1. As college students, we are now at an age where we can and are expected to and *want* to think for ourselves. We search for answers to the questions everyone has about faith and life and love and God, and if we keep getting the pat answers we were given as children (even though, as Paul says, we've put childish thinking behind us), we can get discouraged and begin to think that faith itself--or that God himself--doesn't have answers. Fortunately, at Cedarville, we are in an environment where we aren't just handed the prescribed, you'll-understand-when-you're-older answers. We're surrounded by faculty and peers who are also willing to ask questions and look for answers together, and as we look to God for the answers, we find God and we find that He is enough. But it's not enough to tell someone that...
2. We also face emotional and relational challenges that we haven't faced before or that are compounded by being 'on our own', further from our parents, and at an age of responsibility. If we face these challenges--heartache, homesickness, depression, discouragement, etc.--without a support structure (hard to build when we're away from home and vulnerable), we start to believe that God isn't there for us anymore.

- 1. Putting God first before others (relationships)**
- 2. Putting God first publicly before others (embarrassment)**
- 3. Having questions about the Faith answered**
- 4. Hearing from God**
- 5. Having a best friend close enough to criticize you in love**
- 6. Having a best friend to share your deepest pains with**
- 7. Seeing ambitious leadership in the staff and faculty**
- 8. Having the correct view of life (i.e. that life is all about fun)**
- 9. Having enough people in their life showing them God's love**
- 10. Truly happy**

1. Choosing to follow in your beliefs and not your parents is the largest struggle.
2. Knowing what you believe when being bombarded by other "beliefs" - ties strongly with the first
3. Don't feel the need to be connected in a local body of believers but to experience what the world offers

I was recently asked how I would present the gospel to a high school student, and, though I've been taught to do this in a million different ways, it was difficult for me. This was because I had truths about the trinity,

baptism, and a bunch of other things floating around in my head. I had to stop and try to remember what of all of this information was actually important for salvation, and then I was struggling to find the right words because I wanted to make sure I was being accurate as quotes from chapel and bible classes ran through my head. So, put another way, I think one of my biggest struggles has been the combining of everything I know and everything I'm being taught and coming out with something that makes sense, is coherent, and is applicable.

Sometimes I feel like the only measurable difference between Christians and non-Christians is that we follow a strict code of rules, and the world does not. Are we much different from the Pharisees? The "good" Christian people I grew up with (including myself) were known for high "holiness," "spiritual sensitivity," and "Biblical convictions."

Then I grew up and realized that those "spiritual superpowers" were actually sinful people. I still have a hard time with the fact that real grown up people, real Christians that I look up to, actually sin! Fact is, Christians are sinful. Well of course they are. But growing up not expecting this fact sets one up for a big surprise - a big enough surprises to rock even a "good" Christian kid off their faith.

I think the problem is that the current Church is chock full of Pharisees. We have become rule followers and hypocrites at that. Once we grow up and realize the religious fluff of legalism we believe in we leave. The world sees this too. We have become known for our legalism and judgement of the world - not for our love. (John 13:35)

I think you have hit the nail on the head in talking about how we are to love God. You don't love your wife by looking at a list of things and seeing how close you can live to that list. You love your wife and the things you do for her come naturally. We need to be taught the same thing growing up. Christianity shouldn't be about the sins we don't commit or the good works we do. Christianity should be about growing an intense love for God and love for others - the rest will follow.

The biggest aspect to Cedarville University college students walking away from faith is the fact that we are so blessed. We sing in chapel things like "I may be weak, but your Spirit's strong in me." That is not true for many of us. Let us change it to "May I be weak, so your Spirit's strong in me." The problem is that we are not weak. Our physical needs are met. For example, if we have classes during the hours after chapel and can't find lunch time, the consensus is to leave chapel early to replace physical food with spiritual food. As if we don't believe God cannot provide!

When we think of Jesus fasting for 40 days, we say, "a man can't do that. How could Jesus do that? It must be because He is 100% God." Yet Jesus was 100% man (part of the hypostatic union). Our spiritual eyes are so diminished; we have very little faith. Jesus was able to fast for 40 days because He saw the fullness of this universe. The laws of this universe include both physical laws and spiritual laws. Jesus was able to utilize the spiritual laws. But many here at Cedarville have not exercised a need for utilizing the physics of the spiritual world. If we had faith, we could walk on water. But when we pray "your will be done Lord," many are really saying, "I am doing this prayer in wishful thinking and my hope is based on a tiny faith so that I will be surprised if you answer me."

When did Christian faith flourish? In the times of Nero's Roman persecution--where faith became the faith to move mountains. When did Christian faith become petty? In the times of Constatine's legalization of Christianity. Are we not in Constatine's time today? Jesus says that it is harder for the rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

So what is the ultimate challenge to faith for Cedarville students: that things go well. When academics come easy, when girlfriend/boyfriend relationships are easy sailing, when food is offered three times a day, when we rely on Christian music to uplift our spirits instead of God, when we have chapels that don't challenge us, when we are comfortable being a consumer in our church, when we go to discipleship group to fill out a requirement,

when personal Bible reading/devotions becomes a checklist, when prayer before meals becomes a tradition,... when Christianity is the thing to do... that's when our faith ceases to grow. I ask, why isn't chapel communal: an act of dancing together as the body of Christ? Why isn't fasting a regular activity? Why are chapel messages not ended with a time of reflection to put descriptive words into prescriptive practice? Why are our prayers more focused on what we can request from God instead of praising Him for what He has done? It is in our state of blessing, that we have allowed the things of this world to become our gods. For example, we view a girlfriend/boyfriend (or wife/husband) as a person to bond with ourselves, not seeing the fuller picture that marriage is meant to be more effective for the kingdom of God. Yet, how often do these relationships end up doing the exact opposite of "being in the world, but not of it." Marriage is to engage the world better for His kingdom, not seclude from the world as partners.

Here is a huge challenge for me: Getting involved in a local church when you're already so busy with school work and don't have a car or chauffeur to help you get around. When I say involved in a church I mean not only attendance but also being a part of a church family, being disciplined by older members, and serving in church ministries. When you go long periods of time without being actively involved in a church it becomes increasingly difficult to keep your faith alive and real.

I think that spiritual apathy is one of the greatest challenges for Christians going into college, even at extremely Christ-centered and Christ-focused colleges like Cedarville. Especially at Cedarville, and in the US in general, the difference between an apathetic Christian and an intentional Christian may be subtle to begin with, but in the end it makes the difference between "Well done" and barely getting by. I see spiritual apathy as primarily rooted in a lack of prayer. Students may go to chapel and even bible studies and bible classes, but outside communion with the Spirit, these accomplish little and can even be detrimental. In contrast, as I have seen intentional spirituality develop amongst my friends and myself, we have begun to weave prayer and godliness into every aspect of our lives.

For me the best nudges toward this intentionality involved a mentoring relationship with an older student my freshman year (RA's can be great for this) and the prayer furnace (and now the prayer room). While this will look different for every student and college, spiritually focused RA's who care for the individuals are key, and movements such as the prayer furnace certainly inspire intentionality toward God.

I would say that a few of my challenges of faith since ive been to college are these: staying sexually pure, not being constantly lonely and knowing that God is always there for you and will always love you, not settling for shallow faith, making your relationship with Christ yours and not your parent's, and keeping faith that God has your future in His hands!

I think it's the introduction to new ideas and peoples that cause students to walk away from Christ. Generally speaking, colleges and universities are liberal to the max, and though they preach on diversity they also condemn "narrow-minded Christianity." The only way for a Christian to survive is to be a "Christian" by name only. I'm speaking from the experience of watching a cousin and best friend walk away since our college years began. They go different places and the results are the same

I have given this topic some thought because it concerns me. The scenario I see which is played out in every college student is this: All his or her life, a student has been in the care of his or her parents until college and then they are suddenly thrown out on their own. This is how all of nature works and granted, we learn from our mistakes. Often students have not had the training from their parents on how to pick good friends and such. Freshman year is vital. That year, I set the precedent of attending church weekly and participating in deep friendships instead of remaining superficial with all of my friends.

I would say that a major reason that college students face challenges in regards to their faith is a lack of understanding and/or ability to apply the truths in the Bible to very complex, difficult issues in life. It is a lack of skills to integrate the truths we know about God with the reality of the broken fallen world and form a worldview that can apply to them all. An example of this would be dealing with the problem of suffering and evil and the sovereignty of God. Some questions that might arise would be: How does one integrate the sovereignty and love of God in the face of abuse? Another difficult issue would be reconciling God's justice and our depravity with various views on predestination. How does one go about living a godly life and making decisions on issues without becoming legalistic?

I think that the need for reconciliation and understanding is a major difficulty in the transition from high school to college to the working world. In high school, many people (that come from loving Christian homes) are under their parents care. The perspective is that your parents will figure out the issues and we can just do what we would like-whether it be enjoy movies, video games, hanging out with people. We are more focused on ourselves, gaining approval, having friends, relationships, and self-gratification. We are aware of some issues in the world, but it doesn't really hit home until we go to college and realize bad things happen to our friends, ourselves, etc. The difficult issues of a fallen world smack us in the face and we don't know how to respond. Intense emotion usually result such as anger, frustration, sadness, and pain and it is now our responsibility to reconcile these things instead of our parents. We have to choose for ourselves how we are going to think about these things, and we need to make a decision in order to engage the world and form a worldview in order to deal with these issues. If one doesn't have a relationship with the Lord (in the sense of open communication) these concerns often never get voiced to God, but we try to find other ways (not always valid) of gaining understanding.

Now the solution for correcting the problem is difficult to pinpoint. I think that it should be directed at developing these skills of integrating worldview and the truths of the Bible. I would say that topics should be openly discussed rather than ignored. It would be helpful to know how older people have dealt with these issues without an attitude of this is the right answer. Also it should be addressed how one goes on to trust God when answers seem to be far away or even outside of our human capabilities. How does one strike the balance between trusting God with not having answers to all of our questions and not putting a bandaid on every issue with a blanket "You just have to trust God."?

Our campus tries very hard to address these things with chapel and bible classes. I would say that I am a lot more prepared than many other people my age at state colleges. However, I would also say that I know a lot more of things the Bible teaches, but not a lot of ways in which I can apply these truths to complex issues such as birth control, predestination, political views, sickness and death, etc. I would say many of these issues are "gray areas" that many college students don't know how to deal with.

Some students grow up under their parent's "shelter" their whole lives. Their parents even make a huge impact on where they choose to go to college (My parents really deterred me from attending state college, art school, or even Christian colleges that didn't put a strong emphasis on Christian worldviews). When these student arrives at a college away from home, they realize that all of a sudden they are free and they want to experience life without the control of their parents. At a state college, the student might explore the party lifestyle. At a school like Cedarville, the student might become apathetic toward attending church and growing closer to God.

I think that one way a student could be challenged in their faith is through finding time to do devotions or forgetting. Also, not having a car and being far away from churches could be a reason at public Universities. Another is the people that surround you. It is really hard to live out your faith when you have friends or the people around you are not Christians or at the same level of "spiritual maturity"(er not as devoted to being a Christian..not sure if I used the right words). I hope these help!! I think it is hard for me to personally come up

with challenges, because I have made friends with other girl's who also really desire to grow in Christ. I think that often CU students are in a "bubble" and its when we start facing life after college that has struggles, since we will no longer be in the comfort of a Christ-centered learning place. I do realize that not everyone here is a Christian and that some people are still "young" (I think thats the right word) in their faith. Thus, it is not necessarily a Christ-centered university. However, I think we all have the choice of who we make friends with. If we really wanted to have friends that would encourage us in our faith, there are definitely a lot of those people here too.

Before I came to Cedarville, I attended Rutgers University, a state school in NJ, for my freshman year. While I was actively involved in a YoungLife group and outreach group on campus, I found it difficult to relate to my friends because they were A) all seniors while I was a freshman and B) lived on the other side of campus. Since our campus was spread out over 2 towns on two sides of a river, it was difficult to get together regularly outside of our youth group. In summary, I found it difficult to be a diligent follower of Christ with others without living in the same dorm or general area.

Challenge found in college: Meeting up with new ideas never encountered or considered before. Maybe the solution to this would be to give a child a broad spectrum of experiences so there would be few surprises in a more adult and much more engaging (hopefully) environment such as college. Another answer might be to ground the child in core values that have little room for sending them astray, no matter what they encounter in college life. I think if I would have been a stronger Christian with a better commitment to my values, I would have been less confused entering college. I also get the impression that other religious or traditional students are better able to cope in general with new ideas - they have someplace to stand, a lense through which to interpret new ideas. When ideas are raw and unbased, whether from the origin of the idea (like a child asking "why?" in some perplexing situation) or from the receiver of the idea (as many students are - whether its a view about sex or religion) or, sadly, maybe from a professor who has no basis for his idea to a bewildered college freshman, anyone may be caught off guard, but someone who knows where they came from and has an idea of what life is about will be able to better discern the insincerity of the thought or its fantastical origin.

- sticking to your values (especially in a secular college)
- making time for personal devotions
- going to church, especially if you have to wake early for it
- not "getting bored" with your faith (especially in a Christian college)
- continuing to grow in your faith, not just plateau-ing

Not making your spiritual life a to do list

Distinguishing what you really believe and not just going off what your parent have said

Finding a church to attend that share your beliefs

Continuing with reading your bible and staying with growing in your faith

Not forgetting about your faith and staying true to what you believe

Continue to be caring to other people and your relationship to God so you do not lose your faith

Trying not to fall into temptation even if people around you are doing it

Being able to go out and witness to people and standing firm in your faith

Be able to find older people who are wiser so you can grow in your faith and learn about God

Finding a church that you do not feel like you are just another college kid but being accepted and being able to get involved and make a commitment to the church

This is probably obvious, but it has been the biggest challenge for me. Time management. When I get back from classes and work at night and I have homework to do, I forget that I need to carve out time to spend with God. Relationships can be very challenging as well.

One of the largest challenges for me within the Christian college context is seeing the teachings, practices, and conduct of many Christians as the result of a distinct culture that is not necessarily led by the true teachings of Jesus. That people's actions are the result of that culture and conditioning by Christian institutions of the Church, Christian community, or a university. That Christians, much like other religions or cultures, is just another lifestyle that comes because of one's situation, and that person decides to join Christianity. Additionally, to add onto that point, the mix of politics (not within Cedarville but on the national stage) with Christianity is usually extremely distasteful and it just comes across many times as an agenda that is pushed by certain segment of society (Christians) for practices that aren't necessarily more Biblical than others (whether it is low taxes, capitalism, social justice). This is not to say I don't think we need critical thinking Christians in the government. It often time seems that Christianity has become so institutionalized, impersonal, and many people are there to promote their agenda or to make money on the "Christian culture". I think this struggle is best summarized with this: Is Christianity simply another culture that has arose because of the right conditions, and that it continues to live because of people trying to promote their world view and trying to make money on it? Is this whole thing just a sham?

One of the things that has helped me on this issue is critically examining my concerns. Seriously considering the importance of Christian institutions (the Church is a Biblical & necessary!) helps me get past these concerns. I have come to realize that when living within any culture, it is a natural human tendency to adapt to the practices, language, and teachings of that culture and it is unavoidable within Christianity too. It is sometimes we must take on a personal level on a daily basis, and not let it become a impersonal set of beliefs that drives our actions.

My response to my thought about politics in the 2nd paragraph is seeing that there are always people who will take advantage of an opportunity with wrong intentions, and we are told as Christians to identify and get rid of them. Additionally, the message of Christ transcended through a multitude of hard times where the practices and teachings of Christianity were discouraged with force, yet it survived, and this continues to this day. So these concerns were overcome by this critical examination of Christ's life, the history of Christianity, and some reflection on human nature.

I almost walked away from the faith my senior year in high school. I had attended a Christian school and church my whole life. My mom and dad are firm believers who love the Lord and my church really seeks to preach the Bible. I got to the point where I needed God and Christianity to be my choice, instead of being what I believe because it is what my parents, friends, school, church, and pastor believe. As I started to look at colleges, future career plans, and figure out who I was, Jesus needed to become everything to me, or nothing to me. There was no more middle ground. I think young people go to college and want to figure out who they are and what they have to offer the world. Christian young people have been taught and led to follow God their whole life, and suddenly they go to college and must decide if they want God to have control. As young people we are passionate, we are often extreme, we don't like to walk the middle of road and half-heartedly believe in something. To follow God with everything means sacrifice and I think often times people want to experience what the world says is fun. I also didn't understand how a good God could allow something like the holocaust. How he could let so much evil destroy so many people. My doubts about Christianity were actually why I decided to go to Cedarville instead of the secular college I was planning on attending. I wanted answers, and praise the Lord that I have found so many here! Your teaching in chapel and the Bible classes and profs here have helped me grow close to God and fall in love with Him again.

I think that one of the biggest challenges to my faith in college is actually other Christians. I can understand why “secular” people are antagonistic towards us, but I don’t get why we all seem so eager to pound each other into the ground. I mean, we’re all supposed to be on the same team here, but instead of being effective and actually accomplishing something we get stuck on beating up on each other. I know there’s a lot of diversity in our faith, but that was supposed to be good. I live in the “good ol’ south” part of the “Bible belt” so there are a lot of people who say that they’re Christians, but then don’t live the lifestyle. When you try to talk to them about it, it doesn’t matter how gentle you are, you get called judgmental, insensitive, legalistic or intolerant. Up here it seems to be everyone who isn’t in a specific denomination is this horrible sinner. I’ve been to several churches here and all the pastors seem to slip jokes or degrading comments about any other denomination into their sermons. It’s really hard to be at a school or go to a church where you’re really getting ministered to and you feel like God has called you and all of a sudden the kid in front of you hears what you’re saying turns around and whips out, “If you seriously believe in praying in tongues and you do it, you’re demonically possessed.” Or have a pastor cite something you’ve never heard before EVER as a major incorrect/borderline heretical doctrine that is supposedly at the center of your denomination. I can deal with people struggling with stuff; God knows I have enough of my own problems and drama, I can’t judge anyone there. And I can really understand why people outside the church get mad and don’t understand us, or are unwilling to listen. I mean really, that shouldn’t surprise us at all, Jesus was very blunt about how that would go. But my brothers and sisters in Christ shouldn’t be like that. If someone is struggling (with anything) we’re supposed to bear their burdens with them, which implies being real, not just giving the easy Sunday School answer, but that’s a whole other kettle of fish. And if someone doesn’t have the exact same doctrine as us, shouldn’t we take that as a challenge to stretch our own understanding of God? I’ve learned so much here and I try to walk into every class with an open mind, but it’s really hard to keep my attitude towards God and the church as a whole right when I feel like I’m constantly being attacked from the inside.

The biggest struggle for me in coming to college has been dealing with the self-centered culture of the college environment. While this is not necessarily directly related to a student losing their faith, it is a typical part of the negative effects that the college environment has on students, which often culminate in the loss of their faith. I have found that in spite of knowing this would be a problem, and desperately wanting to remain others-focused, I have been overwhelmed by the selfishness I've found in my heart. While in high school, living with your family and often heavily involved in a church, this does not seem to be quite as big of a problem. I've found that constantly being around people exactly my own age, all wrapped up in our individual classes, tests, stresses, and activities has made me much more self-focused in my relationships with other people. As far as ways to fight this tendency, I think we college students easily get distracted from the REAL reason why we are at school, with these people, on this earth. It's for His glory, for His kingdom to spread! Yet we make ourselves miserable by pursuing our own petty desires, using people and situations in ways we think will benefit us, all the while missing out on what God made us to do! I think keeping that big-picture perspective is needed, along with focusing on opportunities to serve and reach out to other people.

***Family health issues, especially if home is far away e.i. Ohio to Iowa
Conflicting issues from home church to what college says
Lack of support, mostly at secular colleges***

- 1 Questioning the truth of things,
- 2 Peer pressure from other students, freedom to make your own decisions for once,
- 3 Course load and how to balance all of the things now required, church can take a back seat for now,
- 4 New relationships (dating, required church in the am & pm at one time, we could may be add worry about parents who may be sick, getting a devoice etc.) having been in the service A. F. for 20 yr. the thing that I heard

the most from kids was I use to go to Church all the time at home, but now ----- whatever reason they came up with for not going.

Predominant struggle in my faith stems from egocentrically thinking I'm the first to have ever encountered a hardship, and then asking what I think are devastating questions that people far wiser and more Christ-like than myself have wrangled with for thousands of years (and may have answered). It's as though I'm in a class and don't understand something, so I go petulantly to the professor and ask him to explain it me when had I done the hard work and paid attention I would likely understand. None of my questions about the important things are new, and if I diligently, patiently work at it (i.e. pray, read, talk with older believers) I can gain wisdom about the things God has given man to know. And likely, in the process, the Holy Spirit will help me to understand by faith the things I can't apprehend with my mind.

Well, for me at least, some of the things that challenge my faith are being away from my old home church so it feels weird going to a new one. Not being around brothers and sisters in Christ whom you have known so the connection that you feel when you are encouraging each other is not as strong. I also feel that at times, doing Bible readings can feel like a homework assignment rather than something I want to do when it is assigned. It feels awkward.