

# Grace & Truth

## *Youth*

Number 5

*A pull-out supplement for young people*

## The Christian Student

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**I**t is more than seventeen years since I entered my first tertiary institution. I was a sixteen year old starting out into an unknown world, far from home, friends and the church in which I had grown up. There followed four years as a student, filled with great opportunities to prove God's grace, but also great obstacles to overcome.

I have no doubt that the student scene is somewhat different in 21<sup>st</sup> Century New Zealand from what it was in the Welsh colleges of the mid-1980's. Increasing pressures are on Christians, standards seem to be plummeting, and all sorts of peculiar emphases are being introduced. But there are still many similarities too, for human nature hasn't really changed since Adam and Eve plunged the world into sin over six thousand years ago. And, of course, the Bible is always relevant.

Let me take you back almost two thousand five hundred and ninety years, to the days of a teenage student called Daniel. You may remember the background to the story - how the remnant of once godly Judah had been overwhelmed by worldly Babylon after they had departed from the Lord. There seemed little hope that the tide could be turned for the people of God. If there was to be a recovery, it would have to be with the rising generation who would provide the future leaders. To make sure this did not happen, the enemy resorted to a cunning strategy. They concentrated on the 'student population', and introduced the following policy (see Daniel 1:3-5):

1. Take them away from home.
2. Change their reading habits (make them read literature they are not accustomed to)
3. Change their speaking habits (let them constantly hear a language they are not familiar with).
4. Change their eating & drinking habits (let them dine just like the others).
5. Keep this policy up for three years.
6. Review at the end of this time. It should be discovered that most of them would have changed their allegiance, and be no different from other young leaders.

See how similar it is to your own situation as a Christian student today!

### **A new situation**

Firstly, if you are at a tertiary institution, you may well have moved away from the home: parents, relatives and friends among whom you grew up and fellowships in which you were guided and guarded are all far away. No longer can you easily arrange to see the pastor or elders who prayed for you and counselled you in Christian ways, or get together with respected Christians who know you well and can speak honestly to your situation. So do make sure that if you are feeling under pressures you never anticipated, you contact them for their prayer support. Do not sever connections. Gather behind you the praying people of God.

### **A new philosophy**

Secondly, you will almost certainly change your reading habits. Literature used in higher education is deeply impregnated with humanistic philosophy. Even textbooks for religious courses often include material from the standpoint that undermines the traditional Bible-believing faith of the evangelical Christian. It is also sad to realise that the evangelical market of private reading materials has been flooded with a great number of sensational and unbalanced books. Make sure that you maintain a diet of good Christian reading material, including the well-proven Christian classics and the biographies of missionary pioneers and godly men and women. And never, never, never let that habit of regular, quiet, prayerful, unhurried study of the Bible slip away. It is an essential lifeline to keep you spiritually alive during these crucial years.

### **A new environment**

Thirdly, language on every side is probably different for you now. You will doubtless be surrounded by humanism, agnosticism, New Age ideas, shallow religious sensationalism, not to mention almost certain vulgarity and blasphemy to a degree you will never have heard before. Let me encourage you to make sure you appreciate and regularly seek fellowship with those who love the Lord and speak the language of Christ. And if you have moved to a different town, make sure that you place yourself regularly beneath the ministry of a Bible-believing church.

### **A new lifestyle**

Fourthly, beware that you do not abuse your body. Do not indulge in excessive dining out which usually means 'junk food'. It may be good for the social occasion, but bad as

a regular practice. Also beware the indulgence in alcohol so prevalent in today's society generally, and particularly among tertiary students. Whether or not you are a total abstainer you must recognise that drunkenness brings dishonour to the gospel and is condemned in the Bible. Furthermore, the atmosphere in which most alcohol is consumed is hardly conducive to purity of thought and holiness of life. I would encourage you to spend time with Christians around a table enjoying nutritious food and healthy conversation, rather than surrounded by unbelievers at the bar. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

### **A new temptation**

There is one great temptation which Daniel does not appear to have had to deal with. It is in the area of sexual relationships. Since the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960's many Christians have succumbed to the increasing pressures of a permissive society. We live in an age when a growing number of even young teenagers have, or at least claim to have 'lost their virginity', and when sex outside marriage has become the rule rather than the exception. The student community will exert tremendous pressure on the Christian to conform to that ungodly norm. You must be ready to do as Joseph did (Genesis 39:7-12) and as Paul commanded (2 Timothy 2:22), and flee - in action as well as thought if necessary - the temptation to dishonour God.

### **A renewed resolve**

Like Daniel, you will need to 'purpose in your heart' not to give in. To maintain purity you must keep up your stand throughout these crucial years. It certainly seems that the Christian community has suffered from increasing worldliness, shallow sensationalism and compromised standards of holiness. Humanly speaking, any change depends upon the rising generation - will they become the new godly leadership of tomorrow which we so desperately need? And will you be among their number?

May the Lord be gracious to you and enable you to "take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day..." (Ephesians 6:13).




*This article is based substantially on an article by Trevor Knight entitled "Three Crucial Years" and published in the Evangelical Times in the UK in 1987.*

# GRACE & TRUTH

## YOUTH CAMP

An annual camp designed for young people from age 13 to students at university, particularly those in the Reformed Baptist Churches of New Zealand.

### AIMS

-  To provide an enjoyable, interesting and stimulating holiday for young people
-  To present the Gospel and encourage young Christians in their walk with Jesus
-  To provide an opportunity for friendships to be formed with young people from other Reformed Baptist churches

Grace & Truth Youth Camps provide a full programme of physical activities as well as various meetings for teaching the Bible and discussion.

### DATE & PLACE

The 2002 Youth Camp will be held 4-9 April at Camp Sladdin, Clevedon, South Auckland.

For further information and booking forms contact:

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