



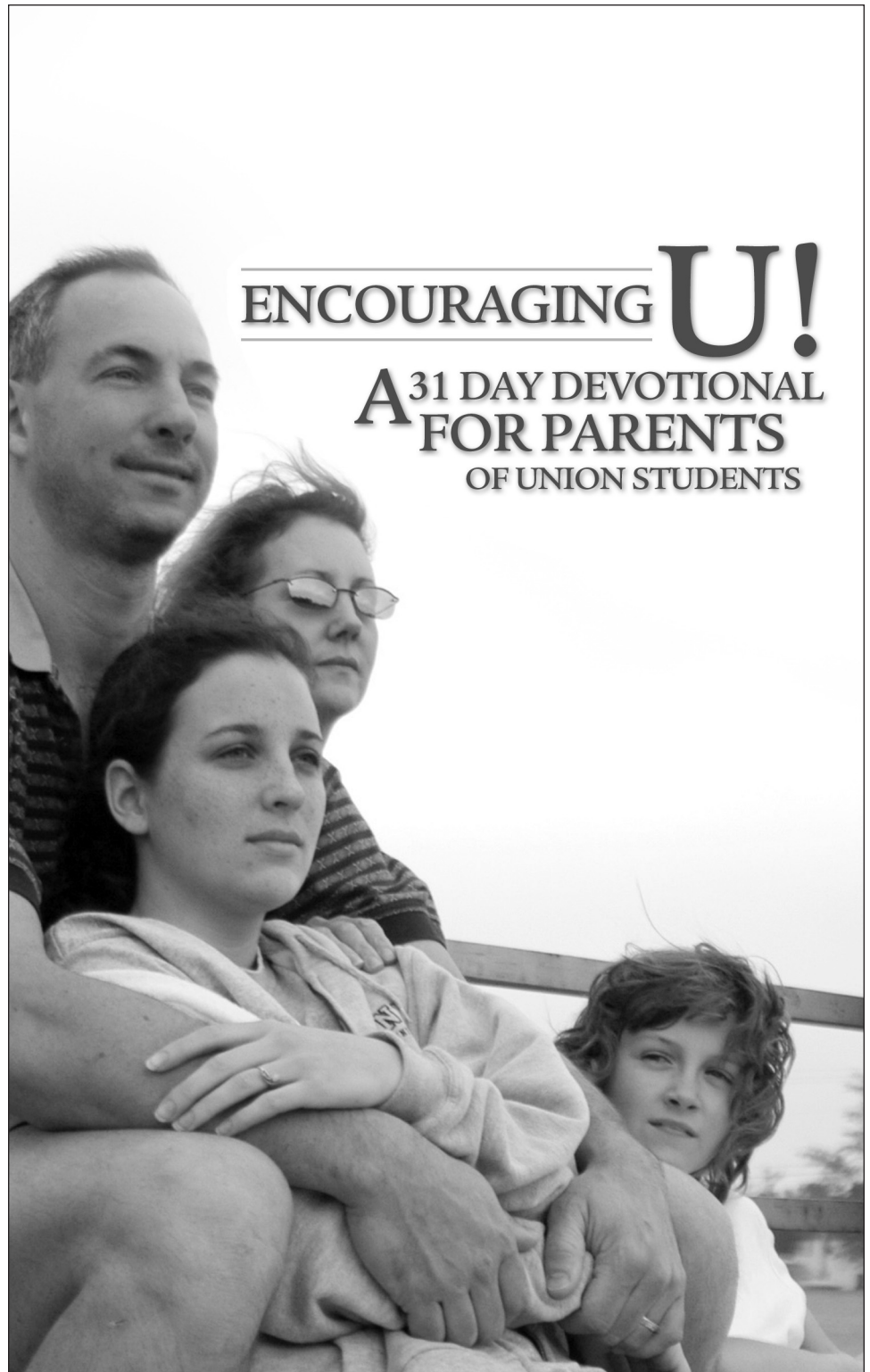
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ENCOURAGING **U!**
A 31 DAY DEVOTIONAL
FOR PARENTS
OF UNION STUDENTS



August 25, 2007

Dear Parent:

Welcome to the Union University family! You and your child have made an excellent choice to study at one of the finest, academically excellent, Christ-centered universities in the country. We realize that much attention focuses on the incredible young men and women who make up our new freshman class. Orientation week begins today, and all areas of the University will be working with this incoming class to make the transition to college life at Union a smooth and positive experience. We understand, however, that the college transition is also very significant for you, the parent of these students. Therefore, this devotional was created with you in mind. We designed this book to be inspiring, informational, and instructional. You will probably talk often with your child this month, and the devotional is designed to equip you with sound advice from people who will be walking alongside your son or daughter. If there is any way we can be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to walking with you on this journey.

In His Service,

Gene Fant, Ph.D.

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Co-Editor and Vice President for Student Services
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*“Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name.
For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.*

Psalm 100:4-5

Union University’s focus verses, 2007-2008

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Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. Hebrews 13:18

A faculty mentor once said, “90% of the students in a given professor’s classes are there to pay the bills. The remaining 10%, however, could never pay enough to offset the importance of that professor in their lives.” I think there’s something to that idea.

Because I went to college for so many years (I jokingly tell my children that I completed the twenty-fifth grade!), I had a large number of teachers and staff members who greatly influenced my life. Some were confidants, some were mentors, some set my mind on fire, and some exasperated me with their ideas and attitudes. Faculty members in particular loomed large in my life, in ways positive and negative.

Union spends a great deal of time and effort in recruiting faculty and staff who are both outstanding in their fields and absolutely committed to our university mission. This is a hard task, but one that our administration embraces because of the importance of having a learning community that embodies what it means to be rigorously thinking, joyfully serving Christians. Most of Union’s faculty and staff could make a great deal more money at other institutions, but we want to serve at a place like Union, where we can teach students like yours.

Being an educator is a high calling; it bears great responsibility and wonderful opportunity. We take this calling seriously. We demand academic excellence while cultivating personal relationships with our students.

In my department (English), for example, we plan an average of three one-on-one conferences with each of our freshman students during the first semester. This enables us to customize our instruction to every student, allowing each one to strive for his or her best. In the process, we also learn about our students as persons. I know that I often find out about difficulties in a student’s life during these sessions and end up praying with the

Matthew 8:23-27, especially verses 25-26: *The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*

Remember when your student first started walking? Playing in the back yard without direct supervision? How about the first day of kindergarten? The first solo drive in the car? Now that little one is grown up and headed for college.

I remember fondly my parents' weekly phone calls during my freshman year. I know that they wanted to keep informed about my studies, but I also know my mama well enough to know that she was worried about me and wanted to search my voice for signs of trouble. Twenty years later, I know that she still worries about me. She's even told me before that the best a parent can hope for is to be able to stop worrying when Jesus comes back. Short of that, the worries continue unabated.

A dear friend's daughter recently had a serious health crisis, one that caused my friend to contact me to ask for my family to pray for her family. In our email exchange, I mentioned that I've come to think that "fearfulness" is a synonym for "parenting." She quickly agreed and added, "I also think that parenting drives you to your knees faster than any other activity."

When Jesus was on the Sea of Galilee, he soothed the disciples and calmed the storm. The disciples were completely terrorized by their circumstance, and rightly so. The storm was real and the danger imminent. The words that He shared with the disciples, however, are instructive: "Why are you so afraid?" Another way to translate the phrase is, "Why do you keep being so scared?"

As parents our lives are filled with storms. Some are predictable, like puberty and teen angst, and some are random, like accidents and illnesses. No matter what, though, we should know that just as Jesus was in control of that stormy sea, God

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your souls and with all your mind.” Matthew 22:37

Is your student living by “The Zacchaeus Principle”? Are you? While Bible studies and prayer groups are a regular part of campus activities at Union, students also participate in *Rounders*. Through these small group reading clusters, books by authors like Francis Shaeffer, St. Augustine, Chuck Colson, J. I. Packer, and many more are a regular part of students’ spiritual diets. A program like this, in addition to others on the campus, is an example of the intentional Christian learning community which your child has joined.

Through all that takes place at Union, we encourage students to integrate Christian faith with every aspect of learning and living. Too often, modern society encourages the compartmentalization of faith. Christians read their Bibles, pray, and engage in spiritual activities. However, bringing Christian faith to bear on literally every aspect of life is the result of a person who truly loves “the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37) The discouraging status of contemporary culture in America makes it undeniably clear that simply “loving Jesus” is not enough to be the salt and light which we are called to be. Our faith cannot merely be an avenue for personal piety that makes us feel better about ourselves. It must be the foundational framework from which we approach all of life.

During their time at Union, students who are being prepared to perform skillfully in the marketplace are learning to think Christianly as they do so. It is our hope that through nursing, education, law, science, engineering, and more that Union graduates will step into the future working and living in such a way as to serve the world and honor Christ through every aspect of their lives.


Sure, Bible studies, chapel services, and mission trips are dynamic parts of the Union University experience. However,

there is much more. In English classes, intramural games, special lectures, and student life activities, students are encouraged to flesh out their faith in all of their thinking and living.

In Luke 19, Zacchaeus climbed up in the sycamore tree because he wanted to get a better look at Jesus. He realized that he could see Jesus better if he positioned himself differently. In a manner of speaking, there are “trees” throughout the Union campus—trees where students, if they will but look, can see Jesus like they have never seen him before. “The Zacchaeus Principle” is played out daily as students are led to see and understand the truths of Christianity through every thing that takes place on the campus.

Lord, may Union University be a place where my student can gain a better vision and understanding of who You are through the events of her college career. During these days, lead her to love You through heart, soul, and mind.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Stop and imagine the one room, closet, or drawer in your house that you would not want anyone to see. All of us can picture “the shameful spot” we would prefer remained hidden. Perhaps my favorite example of college students putting this principle into play is the roommates who in effort to “clean” before dorm room check stashed piles of dirty dishes into the oven! Interestingly enough, many of us often resort to similar schemes in our Christian walk.

To live as a person of integrity means to live as a person who has nothing to hide. So, what do we seek to hide? In dorm rooms, it may be as simple as dirty dishes, but in our lives, it is often weakness and sin.

“What do you know you need to tell me but don’t want to tell me?” I can’t tell you how many times I asked and answered this question during my years at Union University. During my freshmen year, God blessed me with a friendship with Valerie. Over the course of my four years at Union, Valerie became more than a friend to hang out with on the weekends; she became my trusted confidant and accountability partner. At least once a week during our freshmen year, we met at Union’s prayer chapel to share our struggles, confess our sin, and pray for each other.

This friendship proved to be one of God’s greatest helps as I sought to live as a person of integrity. At first the vulnerability of such a relationship is frightening. Since the Garden of Eden, our sin nature has prompted us to hide when we’ve failed. As people of faith, however, God calls us to be honest with Him and others. While such transparency is often difficult, we can be assured that the fruit of an accountability relationship will be growing character and genuine Christian community (James 5:16).

Pray that God will send your son or daughter an accountability partner at Union. In this friendship, pray your

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

The phone rings: it's your student. You can sense the anxiety as he speaks, "I don't know if I am going to make it here. I just feel so overwhelmed by everything." You wish that you were not so far away as you search for answers.

Feelings of being overwhelmed are not uncommon for first year students. Away from family and friends, being in unfamiliar surroundings, and faced with challenging academic coursework, many students can feel that they just can't cope. Numerous resources are available for your student and some very practical steps can be taken that will be very helpful.

Encourage your student to talk about his problems. Try to find out specifics. Is it lack of friends, difficulty with a specific course, inadequate study skills, etc.? Union's website (www.uu.edu) has a wealth of information and lists many resources. A call to Kimberly Thornbury, Dean of Students (661-5090), Andy Pettigrew, Acting Director of Campus Ministries (661-5165), or Paul Deschenes, Director of Counseling Services (661-5322), can be helpful as a first step. We can help your student to reach with appropriate resources: tutoring, a Bible Study group, spiritual guidance, help with study skills, or health services for the sick student.

In many instances a situation is made worse when a student is not taking care of himself. Is your student getting proper sleep, a good diet, and exercise? Without the structure of home these things often are neglected. Many students don't understand the ill effects of sleeping five hours a night with a diet of Coke and junk food. A weekend trip home for some rest and home cooking can often be beneficial. Face-to-face contact with parents can provide the opportunity for some extended conversations and the offering of support and encouragement. A visit back to one's

“home church” can make a student aware of prayer support and spiritual resources.

Your student needs a good support system during times of discouragement. Parents often are the most important part of this system. Call on the phone, write letters, send care packages, and encourage family members and others that are close to your student to do the same. Helping your student to focus on spiritual resources can be the most effective way to deal with feeling overwhelmed. Some students are inconsistent in church attendance and quiet time. This inconsistency decreases the reassurance of God’s presence, His promises, and His power to solve problems. Encourage your student to find and meditate on “reassurance” verses. A Bible Promise Book, concordance, or topical Bible can be helpful. Share with your student some verses that have helped you in difficult times. Suggestions for “encouragement” verses might include: Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:29-31, Joshua 1:6-8, Matthew 6:25-34, and Philippians 4:6-8. A word of prayer over the phone can be effective in lifting your student’s spirits.

God, help my student through difficult valleys. Help him to look to You for strength and answers to difficult questions. Give me wisdom in how to best guide and encourage him.

Tip: Encourage your student to learn good organizational and time management skills. It is difficult to catch up if he gets behind. Counseling Services and the Hundley Center can help with these issues.



Personal Prayer and Reflections

The Lord is near to all who call out to Him, to all who call out to Him in truth. Psalm 145:16

Think about the first moment you saw your student as a baby – that face was written instantly on your mind and that name was instantly branded on your lips. That face and name could never be forgotten by choice – the intimacy, the wonder, the hope of that first moment was carved into your heart forever. Yet no matter the age of your child, your heart will always see him and speak his name like you did that first time – breathlessly, wondrously, lovingly.

Now, instead of calling him in for supper or reminding him to do his homework, you have the choice to call out his name to God in prayer. Your duties as a parent have changed to include mentoring and friendship, but your role before God will never change as a parent interceding for your child. Your arms can be full again with your student as you hold him up to the Father for protection (see Ephesians 6:10-17). Your nights can be spent in the rocking chair again as you cradle him before the Father for wisdom (see Proverbs 9:10-12).

Interceding for your student means lifting up his needs and desires as if they were your own – to present them passionately to the God Who has engraved forever your name, and that of your student, on His palm of His hand (see Isaiah 49:16). Intercession means entering into the Presence of the God Whose memories never fade (see Psalm 111:5). The God Whose love for both of you never changes (see Romans 8:38-39). The God Who sees you and your student, both then and now (see 2 Chronicles 16:9).

Prayer is a strong three-stranded cord linking you, your student, and God (see Ecclesiastes 4:12). It is a cord strong enough to hold your student tightly to God's Ways, just as you held him tightly in your arms (see Proverbs 22:6). God will strengthen this cord to contain your tears. God will lengthen this cord to tether your heart and his until the day when there

Each one of you should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully, administering God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10

The Union University Student Life team likes to cite the fact that on average college students spend 91% of their time outside the classroom. Students have a great deal of flexibility as to how they make up that 91% of time (eating, sleeping, studying, etc.) One major time commitment for Union students is involvement in student organizations on campus. 1 Timothy 4:14a explains, “*Do not neglect your gift which was given to you.*” There is an organization on campus where your student’s unique gifts can be used!

Union’s Campus Organizational Fair is Tuesday, August 28. New students will be able to talk to representatives from over 40 different organizations and decide which organizations they are interested in joining. Some students are more reserved and may need encouragement to attend the fair and see what is offered. Other students will sign up for the mailing lists of all 40 organizations!

Encourage your student to sample a variety of activities, but to prayerfully choose to invest in a few. Caution your student not to mistake breadth of involvement for impact.

Model this in your own life. Perhaps now you are an empty nester with slightly more time for other activities. What will you choose? Again, model commitment to one or two organizations or activities and leave the organization better because of your impact and influence. Avoid living a frenzied lifestyle. Rather, live lives that are intentional and purposeful about where God would have you serve and give of your time.

Lord, thank You that my student is at Union University. Thank You for the many opportunities to be involved on campus and in the community. Give my child wisdom in choosing activities, in connecting with groups, and in using God-given gifts in this group. Help my student to be both effective and intentional in her involvement and service for Your glory.

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

From womb, to stroller, to bicycle, to car, to college. Your child is excited; you're nervous. He/she is looking forward to the unknown; you're looking backward to the known.

I know. . . my older son left the nest first. Four years later my younger son perched on the edge and flew away to college. I'm still adjusting to the empty nest.

Two weeks after students step on campus, they will hit bottom after sleepless days and nights spent meeting roommates, exploring Jackson, joining campus groups, and perhaps even attending classes!

Because I have witnessed the effect of new found freedom from parental boundaries, I give my students six cures for stress on the first day of class. After first class meetings and receiving course syllabi which cover EVERYTHING that's to be done by the end of the semester, my students need to know "how to eat an elephant . . . one bite at a time." I give them advice: get the right amount of sleep, eat five times a day (two snacks), do something fun, do something social, spend time alone, and get some exercise. Any of these things, too little or too much, can create stress; moderation is the key.

That first semester of my older son's college career, I looked at my freshmen students much differently. I wanted to be the teacher I wanted him to have, a caring teacher who commented when he looked tired and who encouraged when he looked discouraged.

I am not alone. Your child is surrounded with caring faculty and staff at Union University.

Meanwhile back at home your child's bedroom stays clean, much too clean . . . at least until the first trip home. First, you see piles of laundry. Then you see a young adult where once a child stood. Conversations are "different."

Then your child leaves again to return to college, but this time leaving you with “peace and quiet” that you have learned to appreciate and items left behind that can’t be lived without such as textbooks or checkbook. You may feel you are buying stock in your choice of mailing systems.

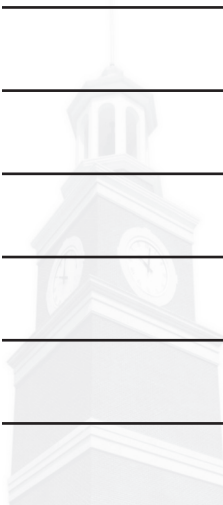
But enjoy these visits. While some children return to the nest, others may not-- finding summer jobs, attending summer school, and eventually pursuing careers.

Most of all, take comfort in knowing your parenting skills are ready to be tested and enjoy watching your child make his/her way.

Lord, lead my child to “still waters” for rest from time to time and give my child energy to keep up with the hectic day-to-day activities of college life—classes, homework, and “fun.” Lead my child to a faculty/staff member who can “stand in the gap” if needed and to a church “home away from home” where he/she will be fed and nurtured.

Tip: Start planning now on where to store “college stuff” when it returns. Send rolls of quarters for laundry in his/her care packages.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Hebrews 10:24-25

One of the greatest regrets heard from graduating seniors is that they did not commit to a local church. The tendency among college students is to “shop around” for a home church. They’ll visit one church one week, a different one the next, and so on without ever committing themselves to a local body. Unfortunately, although it’s entirely natural, the trend begins their first year of school and never seems to end. If there is no commitment on the front end, the disassociation leads them to wander indefinitely with no accountability in sight. The frequent excuses such as “I just don’t belong,” or “I feel like an outsider,” become unacceptable when there is no apparent desire to commit.

According to Ephesians 5, the Church is the Bride of Christ; therefore, followers of Christ are to mirror His image to the world. This is best done through the identification with a local church in order to find Biblical teaching, encouraging fellowship, spiritual development, and opportunities for Christian ministry and service. Many talk at Union about the great community among students, faculty, and staff and treasure its presence. However, if one desires to deepen their roots, enhance their Union experience, and grow in their faith, a commitment to a local church is essential to their university years and beyond. In Hebrews 10:24, the author calls believers to “stir up one another to love and good deeds.” The language he is using is actually quite intense. He is commanding them to practice tough love with one another in order that they may represent Christ well. As representatives of Christ we are to labor with one another to display the greatness and holiness of God before the world. That’s a difficult calling, which is why He places us in community to seek this out together. We see this truth spelled out in the

following verse in Hebrews which states that the stirring up of one another is lived out in meeting regularly together (Heb. 10:25). Opportunities for Christian thinking, development and service do exist at Union. However, students must remember that Union University is NOT a church even though many students feel that chapel services or a dorm room Bible study can substitute that experience.

Your student has an invaluable opportunity to commit themselves to a local body that can become a home away from home. They can connect with a congregation of loving Christian people of various ages that will help make their time at Union an even richer and more fulfilling time. Local church commitment is a vital part of the college experience and a calling as your student seeks to become all that God called him to be.

Father, please impress upon my student the urgency not to simply attend a church but to faithfully commit to one. May You use it to provide a community that holds him accountable to being faithful to You during his time at school. Please bless my student as he seeks to be obedient to You in committing to a church.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. 3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Romans 14: 2

How tempting it is to determine that the decisions one makes for her life ought to be the decisions that others, similarly situated, make for their lives. Vigorously advocating that brand of self-centeredness is one way to practically guarantee community disharmony. This is especially true at Union University where Christ-centeredness, not self-centeredness, is the community norm. Let's glimpse at the Biblical record.

Scripture reminds us that some things --- food preferences and the relative importance of days (Rom 14) --- ought not to be the source of irreconcilable differences within the community. Similarly, differences in personal history, (John 4), gender, (Gal 3:28), net worth (2cor 8), race (Luke 10), spiritual gifts, (1 Cor 12), need to be received in accord with the properly interpreted Canon. For instance, Jesus welcomed the divorcee with the checkered past and makes the racially outcast Samaritan an icon for "neighbor." Paul discounts gender differences, encourages the well-to-do to be financially supportive of the impoverished and encourages the celebration of all of the spiritual gifts. The church at Antioch (Acts 13) seems to have had an ethnically diverse leadership team, and John's vision (Rev 7) describes a great multitude of believers from every nation, all tribes and all peoples, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Be thankful that Union University-- an almost mini-United Nations in terms of its appeal to a geographically, ethnically, and racially diverse population -- models the filtering of both experiences and expectations through the prism of Scripture, and that it encourages -- even nudges --all members of this increasingly diverse community to do the same. The value-added to your child's educational experience is preparation to function well in an increasingly heterogeneous society. Your child

When considering an investment, the idea is to prepare ahead for some future event. The words of Jesus are instructive: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down (emphasis added) and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money (emphasis added) to complete it?” Luke 14:28

Today, and for the next several years, your tower is your higher education investment in your student. You and your student could have invested elsewhere, perhaps at a less expensive, state-supported university. We are thankful you chose Union; for many years Union has been preparing to receive your student, to equip your student for life’s challenges and joys, and to help your student live in this world without becoming caught up in the value systems of this world.

Today, early in your student’s time at Union, you may be experiencing some financial apprehensions, especially about next year and the years which follow. Such apprehensions are “normal” and are even good if they have the effect of strengthening our dependence on our ultimate provider, the One True God.

Today, very early in your student’s time at Union, also is a good time to “sit down” and assess the positive things you and your student can do to help ensure there will be “enough money” for future expenses. In very practical terms, some of these steps include the following.

First, make certain you know what you owe and when this money is due. If you have any questions, contact--at the earliest date possible--people at Union who will answer your questions. A great place to start your inquires is with the staff who serve in Union Station. Call 661-5000 or 1-800-33-UNION.

Second, it may be wise for your student to find part-time employment, either on-campus or off-campus. Being a full-time student and a part-time employee are not incompatible if the employment has the effect of disciplining your student’s time management. Part-time employment should not exceed 20 hours per week. For assistance, have your student contact Amy Miller in the Financial Aid office at 661-5407 for on-campus employment

opportunities or Career Services at 661-5421 for off-campus employment opportunities.


Third, make certain you take full (legal) advantage of the federal government’s generous tax advantages associated with qualifying higher education expenditures. These tax advantages come in three forms: (1) the HOPE credit, (2) the Lifetime Learning credit, and (3) the tuition and fees deduction. For detailed--yet readable--information on education tax credits and deductions, visit www.irs.gov and find IRS publication 970, “Tax Benefits for Education.” Separate from these possible tax advantages, if you are a Tennessee resident your student may be eligible for the Tennessee Lottery Hope Scholarship.

Fourth, it may be necessary to borrow money to help pay college expenses. If borrowing appears necessary, we encourage you to investigate (1) a federal or state-supported student loan, (2) a federally-supported PLUS loan (or parent loan), (3) a home equity line of credit loan if you are a homeowner, and (4) a loan based on your 401(k) (or similar plan) accumulation. Before borrowing, make certain you investigate several options and make certain you understand the specifics of the loan agreement.

Finally, don’t forget--during the course-by-course and semester-by-semester time your “tower” is being constructed--to celebrate your student’s achievements and to thank God for providing the necessary resources.

God, grant me the wisdom I need to be a good steward of my finances, especially as I invest in a Christian education for my student. Help me to avoid the trap of forgetting to celebrate even as I plan ahead for expenses.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



Day Twelve

The Union Bubble: Preparation for Mission *Andy Pettigrew*

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35

Students at Union regularly can be found discussing the Union Bubble. More often than not, it is talked about in the negative. Students frequently label their occasional feeling of being too sheltered referring to the Union Bubble. This "bubble" is the unseen wall insulating Union's campus from the outside world...or at least that's how it is perceived. Having served previously in campus ministry at the University of Washington, I am quick to respond to this comment by reminding those students how grateful they should be to have a "bubble."

I believe the Union Bubble does exist, but with good intention. It's like a football huddle. In American football, players huddle together before every play in order to collect their thoughts and strategize before executing their game plan. Union University, in a sense, is like a huddle. In seeking "to provide Christ-centered higher education...in service to Church and society," a huddle is necessary. An environment is created on campus which helps students prepare for life on mission with God. All followers of Christ have been called to be about His mission, making disciples of all nations unto the glory of God. As students pursue learning in Economics, Biology, Spanish Literature, or Philosophy of Religion in light of their faith, they are preparing for mission. Students need a place to come together in community to discuss how to live out their faith in "the real world."

While in college students, on the other hand, should step out of the Union Bubble to see what's on the outside, for it can become a temptation to find permanent residence in "the comfort zone." During the university years, the Union Bubble, can become a place that students treasure while serving God in the world. Through a GO Trip, their church, or local ministry involvement, students can taste the outside world while

taking advantage of the Union community which allows for conversations preparing them for life beyond college. Although it may be unhealthy in college to grow too comfortable in the Union Bubble, I can honestly say that I am thankful for how Union seeks to intentionally provide a setting to think Christianly about all of life in preparation for His mission.

God, help my student to become thankful for the Union Bubble as it prepares them in a positive way to serve You. Please help them to not become too comfortable in the Union Bubble, but to trust that You will direct their paths as they seek to prepare for the plans that You have for them.

Tip: If your student mentions an eagerness to get outside of the Union Bubble, encourage him or her to drop by the Office of Campus Ministries, and we will gladly connect your student with meaningful opportunities for service locally and throughout the world.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



I always laugh at the word “dormitory,” since it means “a place to sleep.” Everyone knows that the dorm is a terrible place for a good night’s sleep. Too many stereos, parties, and strange pranks.

My college roommate was David; we’d been friends since junior high (he was a year ahead of me in school), and we went to high school and church together. We were good friends and ended up rooming together for three years. We shared the same basic tastes in music, movies, and sports. Several times I’d spent a week with his family while my folks were on vacation, so I knew that he snored, wore paisley pajamas, and studied a lot. He was smart, athletic, and funny. We should have had a good experience, right?

Well, he was exactly what I expected as a roommate; I, however, probably was not what he had expected. Frankly, I was pretty obnoxious. I wanted things done my way, usually without asking. If I wanted to have friends over, I never asked if he needed to study; I just invited them over, no matter how late. If I wanted to watch T.V., I’d just turn it on and ignore him. He was a saint for not wringing my neck on many occasions.

Colleges spend an enormous amount of time trying to match up roommates according to interests and profiles. Residence life directors wrestle with these assignments for weeks, even months, because well-matched roommates cause fewer problems for the dorm staff. For freshmen who attend a college where they don’t know many people, roommates often become best friends. They will eat together, go to parties together, and maybe even join the same clubs.

A good roommate is a blessing. David and I helped each other be better about attending church and Bible study. In spite of my flaws, I felt accountable to David and that kept me out of some trouble. I wish now that I had tried to fulfill Hebrews 10:24-25b with David: *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds . . . Let us encourage one another.”* I wasn’t consistent or considerate in how I treated


David, and as I reflect on our relationship, I now realize that Luke 6:31 is also good advice for roommates: *“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”*

You know your student better than anyone else: what are some habits or attitudes that will likely be hard on your student’s roommates? Pray that God will help them to work through these areas of difficulty. If you don’t know your student’s roommates, pray that God will give you an opportunity to get to know them better. Sometimes God brings people into our lives who are there to teach us, humble us, or allow us to learn to minister. If you start praying now that your student and his/her roommates will encourage each other, it may greatly enhance their experiences together.

God, help our student to be a good roommate, one whose faith will encourage others in the dorm. Please bless my student’s roommates; help them all to be able to live together in peace and to have an exciting friendship that will glorify you.

Tip: Make your student’s roommates part of your family. Send them birthday cards and care packages. Pray for them regularly. Take them out to eat when you visit campus.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



I will never forget September 11, 2001, as it unfolded on our Union University campus. I am usually home writing on Tuesdays, so it was there that I got the call telling me that planes had plowed into the World Trade Center and that everyone was gathering in the chapel for an impromptu prayer service. I rushed into school and found a stunned community assembled in a nearly full chapel.

I remember little about the words that were spoken that day. We were all in shock, and words often do not penetrate in such times. I do remember, though, the quality of our community experience that day. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators were just people that day, fellow Americans, fellow Christians, fellow grievers. We wept and prayed together, and staggered back to our responsibilities a bit stronger because we were facing the crisis together.

Time does not stand still when kids go off to college. There is no guarantee that tragedy will be a stranger to us during these years. Perhaps it will strike at home, with a grave illness or death in the family or unemployment. Perhaps it will strike at Union, with a sudden student death or even a freak weather incident. Or perhaps it will strike our nation, as on September 11th.

This is the human condition. Bodies break down, the weather turns on us, and people kill each other in war. We do not live in the best of all possible worlds. Instead, *“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God”* (Romans 8:19-21).

If tragedy strikes our nation, your student, or your family while your son or daughter is away at Union, you can rest assured that your loved one is not alone. He or she is cocooned in a community of faith and compassion. Support will be offered not just by “official” administrators and staff people but also by caring roommates, friends, and teachers. They will remind

Paul and Timothy prayed for the saints at Phillippi what is indeed a relevant prayer as your student embarks upon her college education. It is also a relevant prayer for faculty, staff and administrators regarding our students:

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.” Philippians 1:9-11

That’s it. That is what you ultimately want for your student and is what we want for every Union University student: to have insight; to be able to discern what is best; to make good decisions.

Consider the decisions and development milestones your student will be facing in the next decade of her life: Finding giftedness. Choosing a career. Studying harder than they have ever studied. Identifying with a community of friends. Seeking a life mate. Managing finances. Managing time. Investing in a body of believers. Balancing and developing hobbies. The next decade in your student’s life is about choosing to know...choosing to know who she is, to know what to do with herself, to know how to love and be loved. And hopefully choosing to really know God and to seek His best in all of the above.

Union University is a place that seeks to take everything captive for Christ. When we study across the disciplines of science, literature, history, mathematics and on and on we ask the question, “What does the Truth of Jesus Christ bring to bear in this area of knowing?” Asking that question holds the secret to good decision making. What does the Truth of Jesus Christ bring to bear on the decision I am facing?

Your student is in a place where the path to good decision making is not kept secret. People all across this campus have found their life’s calling in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with college students whether in the classroom or on the ball field or over coffee at The Lex. But we need your help. And here’s

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 46:10

As I prepared to depart for a two-year term of service with the International Mission Board in Germany, my parents blessed me tremendously by not only *allowing* me to go but also *encouraging* me to obediently pursue that to which I felt God had called me. I share with you my parents’ public affirmation of my going: “As John said, ‘I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.’ God knows that my greatest possession – if I can call them that – is my children. And so I say to him, ‘I have given her to you over and over throughout her life, and with the greatest joy and the greatest gratefulness, my hands are open.’ It’s not my call on her life, not my choice for her to go, but it’s my choice to say, ‘I love you, Lord. Take her where You will, do with her what You will.’ To deny the call would be against all we have taught you, all we say we believe, and all that Scripture says.”

I didn’t just wake up one day thinking, “I think I’ll go be a missionary in Germany.” Honestly, it is still a little amusing to me that I even went! But, there is no question that God used significant people and events in my life throughout my time as a college student at Union to open my mind, my eyes and my heart to *His* heart, which is for all the nations.

My first international mission trip was a GO Trip to Israel my junior year at Union. I was a little nervous about telling my parents I was interested in going. I had never been out of the country and didn’t know how supportive they would be about this seemingly great opportunity. Thankfully, even though they were cautious, they were very supportive of my interest in going – and my eventual decision to go.

I look back now and see how significant the support of my parents was and am incredibly grateful that winning them over was not a battle I had to fight. I can’t count the number of conversations I’ve had with friends or students over the past few


years who found themselves in quite different situations with their parents. Even when the cost for my parents was high, they sought to prod me along in obedience to God regardless of what He was calling me to do – or where He was calling me to go.

Each year hundreds of Union students literally travel the world on short-term, Campus Ministries-sponsored mission trips. During GO Week each fall, opportunities for joining God in what He is doing locally, domestically, and globally are made known to students through chapel services, Global Gatherings, on-campus guests from the local community, from around the country, and from all over the world. Our prayer is that God uses this week to ignite in Union students a consuming passion for what is seen all throughout Scripture – God’s desire for all nations to know and worship Him as the One, True, Living God.

With GO Week just around the corner, pray for students to be obedient to God’s call to GO. Should your student want to go, pray for wisdom and discernment. In addition, pray for those at Union who lead students in these efforts.

Father, move mightily in the lives of students at Union as you continue to advance Your Kingdom. May You guide my child as he/she seeks to know Your will and may my child follow You with complete abandon.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6

When Steve finished the fourth grade, he brought home all of his papers and supplies from the entire year. It was quite a compilation of things; however, the single item of which he was most proud was a letter from his teacher. She had taken the time to write a personal letter about Steve (and I am sure one was written to every student in that class) that described his strengths, his unique qualities, and his unquestionable potential for a stellar future. How proud Steve was of that letter!

As Steve grew into adulthood and had moments of doubt in discovering our Lords intentions for him, we began the habit of reading that letter on occasion. With each new developmental stage, the letter seemed to offer clarity to Steve as it described the person he had been. With this reminder of how he had used his God given talents in the past, he was able to think about how these characteristics could look in his life in the future.

Understanding ourselves, our strengths and our limitations, is a life-long process. Philippians 1:6 reminds us that *“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* In other words, all of the lessons that we have been taught and all of the principles that we have had instilled in us are there. And our Lord promises that he will support us as we learn to use them, regardless of the amount of time that it takes.

Having students at home for eighteen years gives parents enormous influence over them. So, the question becomes, how can parents support their students from afar?

First, parents need to remember that every lesson important to know and understand has already been taught, by mouth and deed, probably several times.

Second, parents can send cards, cartoons from the newspaper, quotes from reading material, etc. in the context of, “I thought of you because I remember when.....” These items

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 15:22

When my sons began “eyeing” the opposite sex when they began dating, I advised them to “be what you are looking for” as they speculated, anticipated, and navigated “dating.”

Meanwhile, I find myself walking a tightrope. Ask too much—I’m too nosy. Ask too little—I appear to not care, plus I don’t know anything.

What can you do as your child navigates the seas of relationships while at Union University?

1. *Pray.* Many of you began praying for your child’s future mate the day your child was born. Continue! If you haven’t been praying, it’s never too late to start.
2. *Model.* In your own relationships, not only with your spouse if you are married, but with your parents, siblings, colleagues, and friends, demonstrate by example love, respect, compassion, honesty, trust, etc.-- the very qualities you hope your child and future “in-law” to have.
3. *Listen.* With open eyes and closed mouth, listen to your child. Many times I’ve dominated and terminated conversations by “talking too much” and “listening too little.”
4. *Ask.* This advice may seem contradictory to #3, but there are times when a thoughtful question or two may encourage your child to open up about the frustrations of dating or even to consider an aspect of a relationship not worthy of pursuing.
5. *Encourage.* Perhaps sharing your own dating experiences may encourage your child to see that dating is a normal, and yes frustrating, adventure in the pursuit of a co-traveler on life’s journey.
6. *Stop.* After a relationship ends for your child, don’t say, “Well, I never really thought, liked, believed, etc.” Remember #3. If the relationship ever resumes, your unsaid words can never haunt you.

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20.

My first memory at Union was standing in line on move-in day to get the key to my dorm room, Blythe 5-C. I immediately heard a loud, bubbly voice behind me say “I’m in Blythe 5-A, we’re roommates!” and I was attacked with a big hug. Little did I know that this ‘out of the ordinary’ greeting by a girl who I would call my roommate would become a significant instrument used by God in my life.

I have so many memories during my time at Union, but nothing stands out to me more than the relationships I built during my four years. Through late night conversations, road trips, study sessions, and frequent Sonic runs, we made it through college together. I can confidently say that my friends left a deep impression on me. Those friends became the people that I ran to when I was hurt, excited, or sad. Through their love, encouragement, advice and counsel, they pointed me to Christ. I am blessed to have those girls as a part of my life. Through these friendships I know that, “two are better than one...if one falls down, his friend can help him up...” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Your student may be leaving behind many high school friends or they may be excited to make new friendships. Wherever they are, pray that your student would be ‘cautious in friendship’ (Proverbs 12:26). Pray diligently that God would provide them with constant and consistent friends who will encourage them in the Lord and walk with them through college.

God, thank you for the gift of friendship. Give my student wisdom in choosing friends. Provide godly friends of solid character, love, and encouragement, who will walk alongside my student. Help my student be this kind of friend to others.

Tip: Have your student’s friends over to your house for a weekend. Spend time with them and get to know them.

Day Twenty

Time Management: Is It Good Work for Me? *Kina Mallard*

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Last year was a busy year for my family. My oldest daughter, Kaylen, was a senior in high school, spending much of her time preparing for and applying to college. Our year was one of anticipation as we tried to juggle the life we had created and simultaneously sought God’s wisdom for the right fit for a future life for Kaylen – a life that would be apart from us.

The year was not only a time of business; it was a time of reflection. I was afraid we hadn’t given her the tools she needed to be successful at the college she had chosen, 1,300 miles from home. Was she prepared spiritually? Academically? Socially? Emotionally?

As the year progressed, another fear crept into my thinking. Part of my professional responsibilities is meeting with prospective students and their parents. Throughout the year, I listened as these students recited for me a laundry list of accomplishments and activities. After each session, I was worn out with listening to how busy these high school juniors and seniors were. And when I looked at my life, I realized my daughter was just as busy. We live in a world of “busy,” where productivity and checking off items on a “to-do” list is a sign of success. I was now afraid that my daughter would not be able to manage her time effectively.

The situation will not change when Kaylen sets foot on her college campus, and it will not change for your student during the freshman year at Union. The first week on campus your student will be overwhelmed with a menu of activities served up as “opportunities.” There is much to do at Union and one of the best gifts you can give your college student is support and advice on what to choose and how to choose – to help them manage their academics with their social activities.

This may be hard to do. When you listen as your student shares each possibility, helping him or her to prioritize and perhaps even say “no” may be a challenge because it will all be good work. The question to ask your student is, “Is it good work for you?”

Jesus is the perfect example of time management. He had much good work to do, but He chose what He would do and when. He didn’t heal everyone. He didn’t save everyone. He didn’t feed, clothe, counsel, minister to everyone. He could have, but He realized His humanity and He made choices.

Over-commitment is a common problem for first year students. Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs us, “Listen for God’s voice in everything you do. Every where you go, He’s the one who will keep you on track.”

Dear Lord: Please help my student to seek Your guidance for the activities and work that is Your will. Please help me to be an encourager and to guide, support and learn with Your wisdom. Amen

Tip: Listen carefully and help your student ask, “Is it good work for me?”

Personal Prayer and Reflections



For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
1 Corinthians 6:20

The journey from high school student to adulthood begins with many decisions. There are no longer parents, teachers, and coaches responsible for making these decisions. Students are challenged to think for themselves about daily lifestyle habits that were second nature only months earlier.

Choosing what, how often, and how much to eat can be an overwhelming task. Consider that clichés often arise from fact, like the “freshman fifteen.” Students are thrust into a lifestyle in which they have control and may exercise that control in an unhealthy pattern that leads them down a road to overweightness and/or obesity.

Add to the challenge of eating right the responsibility of getting an appropriate amount of physical activity through exercise or sport participation. Students are faced with deciding which activities can fit into a busy lifestyle that includes academic responsibilities, the pursuit of social acceptance, and spiritual growth opportunities. Unfortunately, making time to exercise and maintain physical fitness often takes second place (at best) to other responsibilities and activities.

The alarming trend in America is toward an overweight population. The percentage of overweight adults in America has grown to 64% in the year 2001 while the percentage of obese adults has grown to 20.9%. (CDC, 2001) Scientists have certainly made the connection between poor daily lifestyle habits and this alarming growth in our population. Our students must recognize the importance of daily lifestyle habits in transforming the future of our nation.


Healthy habits, however, are not simply about our bodies. God calls on us to honor him with *every* aspect of our lives. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:20 that we must honor God with our body and our spirit as Christ has paid a great price for us: His own life. Students must recognize that their bodies are God’s

dwelling place here on earth and must be maintained with respect and honor. Exercising the physical body must be placed in high priority along with daily spiritual growth as we serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

Parents should recognize that their students are going through many challenges as they enter college and adulthood. Part of that growth is making daily lifestyle habit decisions that benefit over the course of a lifetime. Encourage your student to get involved in regular physical activity through physical fitness, intramural sports, and/or lifetime activities. Monitor your student to see what, how much, and how often she is eating and what effect her eating habits are having on her health status. Inattention can allow the “freshman fifteen” to turn into the “senior sixty.”

God, help my student to stay healthy and to pursue physical discipline as a part of her spiritual discipline. Help me, as well, to model my own glorification of You through my own commitment to healthy living.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.” 2 Corinthians 1:3

Can you remember back to not so long ago when your student was sick of home? When they sought any way to get out of the house to hang out with friends? Can you remember the times they walked around home exclaiming that they were so “bored” and wished that home was more exciting? You have probably, on some level, experienced this scenario with your student. Some students are ready to tackle the world; they have had the opportunity to travel in high school or stay at summer camp. Others will probably have a harder time adjusting.

I can remember back to several times in college when I literally cried myself to sleep. I had not receiving a failing grade on a test, a bad break up, or a fight with a roommate - I was just homesick. The strange thing was that my parents only lived fifteen minutes away. Many times I felt lonely, worried, or just plain tired. I needed the comforts of home, a home cooked meal, and my mother’s arms around me telling me that everything would be okay. There were just times that I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders, and I was not prepared to handle it.

The homesickness that I felt was for the things that had been normal and secure in my life. I longed for my “comfort zone” and the warm feeling of knowing that my family was close. The feelings that I felt were very much normal for many college students. College can be a difficult transition, and for some students this is first time being away from home for an extended time. Your student may get discouraged and sad about being away from home, but there is definitely encouragement that you can offer your student.

- Encourage your student to become involved in campus life, make new friends, and find a family away from home.
- Be sure to keep good contact with your student, scheduling regular phone calls.
- Send goodie bags.
- Encourage them to get involved in a local church. Many churches have Watch Care families that “adopt” your child while they are here at Union.

- Don't burden your students with concerns you have about them being at school. For example, don't constantly tell them that you just don't know how you are going to pay for their education or how much you wish they were at home.
- And most importantly – don't remodel their room! Give them a comfortable place to come home to on breaks.

More than likely, your student will experience at least some homesickness while at college. They will need you once again in ways that you probably did not imagine. They will need your wisdom, your care, and most of all your love. (A box of homemade brownies is often helpful, too!) Do not be discouraged and think that your job is now over because your child has left for college. In many ways, it is just beginning. (My own mother would probably agree.) You have spent many years preparing them to be independent, but you can smile and know that even if they seem ready to let go, they will probably be back for a visit soon. Be prepared with open arms, good advice, and some warm chocolate chips cookies.

Lord, please prepare me so that I will be able to offer comfort to my child. I pray that you will strengthen me so that I can be prepared to give good advice and a loving embrace. Help my student find a sense of belonging at Union so that he or she will find a family away from home. Let the advice and love I give be honoring and glorifying to you. Thank you for the comfort that only you can give.



Personal Prayer and Reflections

Union University calls students to obey Christ's command to loving God with their heart, soul, and mind. The calling is for every believer but specifically spelled out in a Christian university setting by training students through the integration of faith and learning. These are big concepts and actually quite difficult to grasp. In fact, for your student who is beginning his or her days at Union, these big ideas will be etched into their minds as a framework for their college experience. How your student will actually be led to understand how their faith connects with science, English, music, or history while teaching them to love God with their whole being through these disciplines will be an overwhelming notion. This is why their remaining years at Union will be spent fleshing these ideas out.

One practical opportunity your student will have to begin fleshing out these ideas is through a program called *Rounders*. *Rounders* are discussion groups centered around key books that help students think Christianly about all of life. A program like this is offered to provide a setting for intentional dialogue helping students know how to connect what is learned in the classroom with living out their faith. Through these small groups, books by authors such as Francis Schaeffer, G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, J. I. Packer, Os Guinness, and many more become a regular diet of students. These groups are led by faculty, staff, and students, thus creating a university wide effort in bringing about these discussions.

It is easy in college to place your studies in one part of your life, friends and extracurricular activities in another, while leaving faith in a separate category. Therefore, Union University aims to lead students to not compartmentalize their faith. The hope is that students during their time at Union will seek to flesh out what it means to "take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). Therefore, although Bible studies, chapel services, and mission trips are a part of the Union University experience, it should not be the only place faith is lived out. Faith can and should be discussed and lived out in the

Day Twenty-Four

Praying for Your Student's Spiritual Growth

George H. Guthrie

“May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants.” Psalm 144:12a

I love the seasonal nature of university life. The slow turn of each year, the rise and fall, as well as the distinct feel, colors, sounds, and smells, of each season lend a wonderful, throbbing rhythm to our community's days. Of the seasons, fall and spring are my favorites. Fall, because the heat and humidity of August give way to the cool crisp air and vibrant colors of October. Spring, because, as an avid gardener, I love to get my hands in the dirt and see things grow. I come by this naturally. You should see my mom's rose garden! My granddad was the happiest man in town when he had a nice, big load of cow manure! I have seen pictures of my great-grandma's sprawling perennial garden, with blooms galore. In other words, it is in the genes.

This year we will harvest loads of blueberries (easy to grow, and there is nothing like just-picked blueberries on cereal in the morning), figs, newly planted raspberries, apples, pears, tomatoes, squash, peppers, corn, watermelon, eggplant (too many! only 2 plants next year!), new potatoes, and pumpkins. I also planted two long rows of asparagus and a bed of strawberries, both of which we will be able to enjoy beginning next year. As I planted the asparagus and strawberries, I took a lot of time to prepare the soil. I tilled it extensively. I added lime to raise the PH, organic fertilizer (we are trying to get away from chemicals), and organic matter. With strawberries, I also used a black plastic mulch, and asparagus will get alfalfa hay, because weeds and grass grow *much too easily*, and, left to themselves, will choke the life out of the good plants. Yet, given room to grow, small doses of fertilizer, a steady flow of water, and plenty of sunlight, these wonderful expressions of God's creativity will grow to maturity and tickle the taste buds.

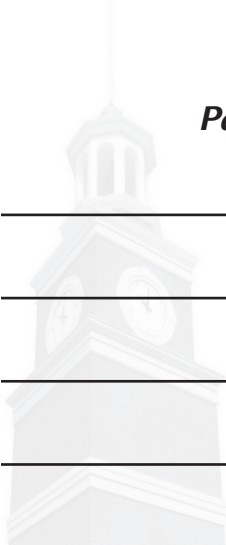
One of my favorite parenting passages is Ps. 144:12a, which reads, “May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured

plants” (NLT). At Union, we are committed to providing an atmosphere in which your student can thrive spiritually. The transition from childhood to adulthood is tough. As you may have experienced yourself, there are plenty of weeds to choke out spiritual sensitivity and stunt spiritual growth. Specifically, Jesus mentioned worries, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for things (Mark 4:19). Also, hard or shallow hearts—alogous in Jesus’ parable to soil that is not well prepared—are not conducive to a dynamic walk with God (Mark 4:15-17). Yet, Union will provide many opportunities for weeding, watering, feeding, and fruitfulness.

Lord please help my student to flourish like a well-nurtured plant this semester. I pray that she will take advantage of opportunities to be fed spiritually and to be confronted when “weeds” sprout up. May her heart be soft towards You, like well-prepared soil, and may You grow her up to be wonderfully productive in the advancement of Your kingdom.

Tip: Even though you may want her to come home often, encourage your student to find a church home in the Jackson area, as soon as possible. Regular meeting with and ministering in the church is vital to one’s spiritual life, and that important community of faith will be vital for her growth.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

In just the past twenty-four hours, you have probably needed someone to say, “What you are doing is tough, but God is using you to do mighty things for Him. Keep up the good work.” We all need an occasional word of encouragement, and your student is no exception. In fact, she needs encouraging words now more than ever before. College can be very challenging physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Your student needs your encouragement each step of the way.

As a parent of a teenager, you are challenged each day to realize that life is a process, not perfection. (Huge sigh of relief!) That concept is so very important for parents to grasp. Whether or not your student is self-motivated to excel in everything attempted, every college student needs an occasional nudge—just a gentle one most of the time—a word of encouragement to continue toward the goal set before him.

The apostle Paul won the silver medal for withstanding experiences of discouragement (Job had won the gold medal years earlier!). Therefore, Paul knew how critical encouragement was to his being able to persevere in doing what God had called him to do. In fact, he specifically told his disciples in Corinth, Rome, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossi, and Thessalonica to encourage one another. Encouragement builds up the family of God. Through encouraging one another, we experience God’s design for His family to be “ours,” not “mine.” In other words, we need each other in the good and the challenging times.

Even if your spiritual gift (see Romans 12:6-8) is not encouragement, pray that God will give you that gift while your student is in college. When she calls you at 2:00 a.m. in tears because she has 400 more pages of notes to study for the exam at 8:00 a.m., fight the urge to preach to her about starting


her studying earlier and using her time more wisely. Rather, encourage her to do her best (and to set two alarm clocks if she does go to sleep!). When he calls complaining that his roommates play loud video games while he’s trying to study, determine not to fight his battles for him. Rather, encourage him to go to the library to study. When he calls asking what he’s supposed to do with his life, encourage him to seek God’s guidance and direction. Most of those calls home are simply looking for an encouraging word from mom and dad, a “Hang in there; I know you can do it.”

Finally, assure your student that you are praying for him. That will be more encouragement than anything else you can say. Then hit your knees and pray without ceasing!

Precious Lord, thank You for giving us Your words of encouragement to face the challenges of every day. Help me to pass those words along to my child.

Tip: Pray Scripture for your child every day. Send weekly cards, e-mails, and phone messages that reassure him that you know he can tackle the challenges of college life.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



When I attended a Christian college (one much like Union), I could always schedule one thing on my calendar *in pen*: Chapel. Two times a week, virtually every student on campus made his way to the large auditorium for music, lectures, or sermons. Now while I would like to be able to say in hindsight that my every thought was riveted on each services' proceedings, I confess to my fair share of daydreaming. But on one occasion, when the Academic Dean spoke from the Great Commandment passage, something he said fired my imagination. He began by reading the text:

"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." (Matt. 22:34-27)

Dean Heie argued that three essential ways to worship God flowed from this Scriptural teaching. First, there is worship A, the adoration of God as demonstrated in expressions of praise. Next is worship B, which is giving glory to God through acts of service to our neighbor. But finally, he asserted that there is worship C – loving God with our minds. In worship C, we worship the Lord by contemplating God's being and character *intellectually*. This kind of love for God drives the Christian to pore over the Bible to see what implications divine revelation has for thinking about science, politics, ethics, and law. Loving God through disciplined thinking, I learned, was a commandment for every believer.

A few days later, my roommate found me studying on a Saturday night. With some incredulity, he asked me what I was doing with my nose in a book during a perfectly good weekend. "*Worship, C, my dear Watson,*" I replied, "*Worship C!*" Ever since that time, I have, in so many words, repeatedly asked of both myself and the students I teach: "How is your worship C?"


As a parent, you know whether your child loves God. If he or she does, you have no doubt seen the expression of that devotion

in youth meetings, praise services, and mission programs. But now that he or she is a part of a Christian *academic* community, you can take the opportunity to challenge your student to display their Christian character by loving God with their mind in the classroom, laboratory, and library. When papers, projects, and exams are due at “crunch” times during the semester, we need to remind them that their best work in these matters is a vital act of spiritual worship too. After all, Jesus considered it an indispensable hallmark of genuine Christianity.

Heavenly Father, help my student to love You with his mind, and, in so doing, fulfill the Great Commandment. Help me to encourage my student to see that worship is expressed in academic excellence and faithfulness in study. Amen.

Tip: One way to help our students see the importance of loving God with our mind is to be an example ourselves. If, for instance, you are reading something by C. S. Lewis, share the fruits of your own intellectual pursuits with your child in a phone call, email or letter.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Romans 12:11-13

November 10, 2002, was a tumultuous day for Union University, as a devastating tornado plowed through the campus between Hurt and Watters residence complexes. The effect of this sudden and horrific event resulted in over \$2 million worth of damage to the campus. Trees were uprooted, buildings were left windowless, mangled debris littered the campus, but incredibly—lives were spared and no one was seriously injured. It was an amazing testament to God’s providential care, even in the midst of this disastrous uproar.

Almost immediately Union’s leadership responded to the event to ensure that family members and friends knew of God’s hand in protecting the lives of the Union community. The following Monday was a day to remember. Students, faculty, staff and community members all rallied together in a united effort to rebuild campus after such a destructive storm. The rapid clean-up was a glorious demonstration of the love and care that overflows from the community here at Union.

As one reflects back to the days following the storm, what is truly memorable is the portrait of a Christian community concerned for the welfare of others. On November 7, this year, *A Day of Remembrance* will take place, as the Union community reflects on God’s goodness and providence. With a shovel in hand, students will disseminate throughout the community as they hope to express their gratitude and thanksgiving for those who helped. They will volunteer in local service agencies, schools, and businesses assisting in projects that will aid these entities.

There are many reasons why people participate in community service, but at Union University it is a spirit of love and service that is at the heart of action. This is a wonderful day to remind students that they can play a part in giving

Day Twenty-Eight

Finances: Encouraging Student Stewardship

(Even When They Don't Have Any Money!) Kimberly Thornbury

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? Luke 16:10-11

I always loved those surprise letters from my mother during college. You know, the letters with the surprise \$10 or \$20 tucked inside. The money promised a meal outside the cafeteria and a movie (that didn't even need to be a matinee!) It's a universal truth that college students always seem to need money.

Now that the student is 18, students can apply for (and readily obtain) a credit card with no parental signature or co-signer. (While Union prohibits credit card companies from soliciting students on campus, often students receive dozens of credit card offers via the mail their first year.)

According to Nellie Mae, the nation's largest student loan lender, the average college student carries an average of \$2,200 in credit card debt. The Vice President of Visa also explains that less than half (46%) of college students pay their balance in full each month.

Students have trouble understanding that if they have a \$1,000 balance and pay the minimum balance each month on a credit card with 18% interest, it will take 12 years to pay off. (Plus, they will have paid a whopping \$1,115 in interest charges!) Many college students naively think that they can accrue credit card debt and pay it off in a few years when they land a "real job" once they graduate.


Many parents help pay for a student's tuition, room, and board but ask that the student himself earn any extra spending money. Students may begin college with a nice checking account balance from work over the summer but soon the balance dwindles as the semester progresses. Financing clothes, fun, and food on a credit card can seem initially attractive and can be a quick fix to avoid the realities of money management. Financial

planning is an important area that students learn independence and decision making skills. Creating a budget, limiting spending, and paying off credit card balances on time, every time are valuable lessons that can be learned while your son or daughter is in college. Students also can learn the spiritual discipline of being content, even when they don't get what they want. Hebrews 13:5 exhorts, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"

Lord, I pray that You would grant my student wisdom in the area of money management. I pray that he or she would be faithful with these scarce resources, and that You would provide contentment in all circumstances. We are thankful that You provide for our every need.

Tip: Many credit card companies will limit the amount of credit on a credit card when asked. See if you son or daughter can be faithful with a small credit limit (e.g. \$300) before expanding that credit limit. Union also offers a wonderful personal finance class that many seniors have found helpful before leaving Union.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. . . . Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1 & 4

My brother developed a taste for Mexican food while he was in college and loved to eat it after midnight. In our city the Taco Bell drive-through stayed open until 5 a.m. or so, so it was not uncommon for him to make a run in the wee hours of the morning.

One time, during his first summer home from school, he was coming in the door at the same time as our dad was walking into the kitchen to grab a cup of coffee to start his day. Steve walked in with his crumpled bag, wearing his pajama bottoms (“It was the drive-through,” he reasoned), with his bed sheet draped around his shoulders.

Needless to say, Dad was pretty steamed. A stern parental discussion ensued, you know the kind: drunks on the road, responsibilities, and curfews. Things were fairly tense between them for a while.

It’s a difficult time when parents realize that an adult is living under their roof. It’s especially tricky for the first few years after that magic 18th birthday. The independence of college life makes it even more intense. It only gets trickier as the 21st birthday looms on the horizon.

In Ephesians 6, Paul writes about family relationships. First he reminds children to “obey” (v. 1) and “honor” (v. 2) their parents, a reminder of Exodus 20:12 (the fifth commandment). I think it’s important, though, that Paul quickly moves to fathers: “Do not provoke your children to anger” (v. 4). In the households of many of my friends, neither the fathers nor the sons were living up to their scriptural admonitions.

So how can we work through these kinds of tensions?

First, we need to think through areas of potential conflict; these issues may include curfews, work, travel, or friends who stay overnight. Perhaps you could make up a list of these areas

and how you would like for your student to handle them. College students are notorious for failing to use common sense, so parents have to walk a balance between responsibility and allowing the young person to learn a few lessons the hard way. The more prepared you are as parents, the more likely you'll be to talk your way through these conflicts without arguing.

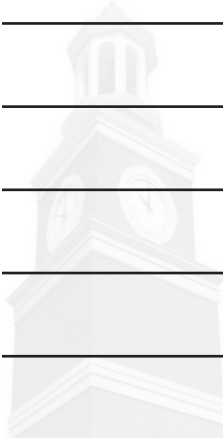
Secondly, choose the best time to talk about these issues. 5 a.m. is not the best time. The heat of the moment is not the best time. On the way to grandma's funeral is not the best time. We must look for times of calm and peacefulness to allow such discussions to bear their best fruit. Also remember never to start negotiations with an ultimatum; leave room for compromise.

The college years set the pattern for how parents and their adult children will relate for years to come. A little forethought and some attention to treating one another with respect will go a long way toward setting a strong foundation for the future.

God, help me as my student makes this transition into full-fledged adulthood. Give me the insight needed to see my child as an adult and help me to be reasonable as I help my child grow into adulthood.

Tip: Plan ahead to find ways to discuss the issues that may become problematic when he / she returns home for visits.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



I could tell from my twenty-two-year-old daughter's voice that things weren't going so well. Even though Ellen didn't voice any one concern, I knew that something wasn't quite right. As her mother, I tried to ask the right questions and respond appropriately to her less-than-clarifying answers. I even quoted a few applicable Scriptures verses.

Then I remembered a popular T.V. commercial. This particular commercial promoting a long distance service showed a concerned father talking to his obviously distraught daughter. All he said was, "I understand," over and over. He offered no counsel, not even reassuring words of wisdom. He just repeated over and over the phrase, "I understand," and allowed his daughter to talk. So, I tried it. Instead of gathering all of the important details and giving a plethora of options for Ellen to "fix things," I stopped talking so much and just listened.

As I listened, I heard Ellen express fear and doubt concerning her chosen major. She had entered college as an undecided major with few qualms. We had discussed how her exposure to a variety of disciplines and professors would be clarifying. We would let the Lord speak to her through her experiences. In her culminating senior field experience, however, these unsure feelings were a different story. She was so afraid that she had not processed her experiences in the way her Lord intended and that she had missed His divine plan for her life.

Psalm 46:1-3 reminds us that *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."* My Ellen's mountains were shaking; her seas were roaring. What she needed from me, though, was confidence that God was in control and that, with His help, she could figure this out. She did not need my advice or my wisdom. Oh, how difficult it was to be quiet and patient and let God be her Counsel!

So how can we know when to offer counsel and when to be patient with the process?

Day Thirty-One

Choosing a Major: Listening to God's Calling

Gene Fant, Jr.

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for servant is listening.'" 1 Samuel 3:8b-9a.

A few years ago I received a call from the parents of a student who had changed his major from pre-med to English. They were livid and wanted to speak with me. Before we met, I asked the student if he minded; he thought it was a great idea.

On that Saturday, the parents poured out their hearts about how they had always dreamed of having a doctor in the family. They'd encouraged their son in his studies and were devastated that he was "only" an English major. They lamented, "What can an English major even do?" (Virtually anything! I've had English majors who completed medical school!).

I paused before asking, "Do you know what your son's G.P.A. is?"

The mother squirmed. "I think it's a 1.5. That's not very good, but he can work harder."

I continued: "And what did he get in organic chemistry?"

Another squirm. "He dropped it the first time and got a D the second time."

I smiled: "Folks, I hate to tell you, but your son really hasn't been a pre-med major in a while. He hates science, hates lab work, and doesn't want to be a doctor. He loves to read and write, however, and shows signs of being a pretty good teacher. He's happier since he changed his major, too. He's prayed about it, he's talked to mentors about it, and I think that he's made a pretty mature decision."

After our meeting, they felt better. It's been several years since then; I can report that the student finished his degree, went on to complete a master's degree in English literature with a perfect 4.0 G.P.A., and became a successful teacher and coach who mentors many young people every year.

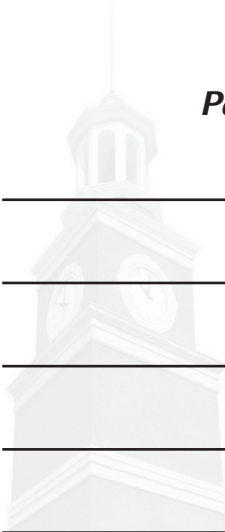
Parents walk a fine line between exhorting excellence and being overbearing in their students' lives. When students arrive at university, they encounter new ideas, new people, and often they realize new dreams for their lives. For some students, the choice of major is a long-planned-for ideal. For others, it's a practical choice. For others, it's a strong sense of God's leading in their lives.

While a student's choice of major is not always equivalent to vocational calling, it certainly is a major part of it. "Vocation" means, literally, "calling"; for Christians it should remind us of Samuel's experience of hearing God's call in the middle of the night. Samuel's mother had given her son to God, and Samuel's mentor was Eli. As Samuel heard God's call, Eli urged the young man to listen to and seek after God's will.

It must have been hard for Hannah to have trusted God and Eli with her son, just as it is hard for many parents to trust their students to the faculty and staff of the university. God, however, has great and wonderful plans for his children (including our own children), and, like Hannah, we should learn to rely on God's wisdom, even as our students are learning to listen to God's voice.

God, help my student to listen for Your calling on his / her life. Send mentors who will help in this process. Give me the peace I need to trust in Your wisdom.

Personal Prayer and Reflections



Contributors

Julie Bradfield serves as the Director of Student Outreach through the Office of Campus Ministries. A 2001 Union graduate, Julie provides direction for the Global Opportunities program at Union. She has enjoyed leading GO Trip teams to Miami, Florida, as well as two teams to Germany, where she served previously as a Journeyman with the International Mission Board.

Todd Brady previously served as the Minister to the University at Union University. He is currently serving as the pastor of First Baptist Church, Paducah, Kentucky. In addition to contributing to Shaping a Christian Worldview, he is a frequent columnist for news agencies and magazines. He and his wife Amy have two sons, Jack and Will, and are expecting their third son.

Paul Deschenes is Union's Director of Counseling Services. He has been a psychologist in Jackson for 25 years. He enjoys fishing, canoeing, woodworking, and gardening. He has been married to Diane for 21 years. They have two children; Daniel is 17, and Anna Marie is 16.

Julie Dockery serves as the Assistant Director of Student Leadership Development. She graduated from Texas A&M University with a B.B.A in Marketing and is currently working on her Masters in Biblical Counseling at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Her husband, Ben, also serves at Union as the Director of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation.

Gene Fant is the Dean of Union's College of Arts & Sciences. He and his wife Lisa are the co-authors of *Expectant Moments: Devotions for Expectant Parents* (Zondervan 2002); they have nine year-old twins, Ethan & Emily.

Ashley Guinn Davis is a 2003 graduate of Union University. After graduation, Ashley served on the Student Life team for four years. She and her husband, Andrew, currently reside in Nashville, TN. Ashley's college roommate, Valerie Trautman, serves as the Director of Donor Relations at Union University.

David Gushee taught ethics at Union for eleven years and served as the Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy. He is a writer, having written or edited nine books and many dozens of articles. He and his wife Jeanie have four children.

George Guthrie serves as Union's Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible in the Department of Christian Studies. He is the author of numerous articles and 5 books, including *The Holman Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (co-authored with Dr. David Dockery), the NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews, and the Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary on Hebrews. He, his wife Pat, and their children, Joshua & Anna, live on a "small-holding" near Jackson, with blueberry bushes, cherry trees, a dog, three cats, eight ducks, and a number of very large catfish.

Gary Johnson serves as a professor of Physical Education, Wellness, & Sport in addition to coaching the cross country teams. He and his wife Holly are fitness runners and compete regularly in local road races. Gary

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Beth Madison is a wife, mother of two sons, adjunct faculty member in the Biology department at Union, and adult Sunday school lesson writer for LifeWay.

Kina Mallard served as Union's Associate Provost for Faculty and Academic Development. She has two daughters, Kaylen and Amelia.

Dottie Myatt is the Assistant Dean for Teacher Education and Accreditation. Her husband, Sam, is also on faculty at Union, and all three of her children graduated from Union.

Howard and Debbie Newell both teach in Union's McAfee School of Business Administration. They are authors of *Personal Financial Management: A Stewardship Perspective*. Howard and Debbie have been married for 34 years and are the parents of two children, a married daughter (Allison) and a college-age son (Grant). They have three grandchildren.

Roland Porter currently serves as Associate Professor, McAfee School of Business Administration. He is a graduate of University of California, Berkeley, CA (JD/MBA) and also serves as Pastor of Agape Christian Fellowship Church, Jackson. He and his wife Patricia, are empty-nesters.

Carla Sanderson serves as the university's provost, giving leadership to Union's Learning Community. She serves as a commissioner for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and board member for Christian higher education associations. Dr. Sanderson and her husband, Larry, have three sons, Clayton (a Union senior), Cody, and Cullen.

Ann Singleton currently serves as Associate Dean of the School of Education. Her 22-year tenure at the university, coupled with her role as a mother of two children who had different college experiences, gives her a well rounded perspective of university life. She coauthored a textbook, *Teaching Mathematics to All Children*, now in its second edition, and was recognized as the Union University 2003 Faculty of the Year.

Stacy Storey is a 2005 graduate of Union and serves as the Administrative Assistant in Campus Ministries as well as the coordinator of Klemata, Union's Women's Ministry.

Pam Sutton is beginning her tenth year in the English Department at Union; she is known for her stash of chocolate in her office. She is the mother of two sons, Drew (24) and Tyler (21). Last fall she experienced "empty nest" as her younger son left to play college baseball. After three years of college, her older son plays for the Houston Astros. She is the quintessential "baseball mom." Her parenting articles have appeared in *The Jackson Sun* and *The Florida Baptist Witness*.

Karen Taylor serves as the Administrative Assistant to the Vice President for Student Services & Dean of Students. She is a 2001 graduate of Union University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and is currently pursuing the Master of Higher Education Degree at Dallas Baptist University. She has been married to her husband, Brent, for five years.

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Kimberly Thornbury serves as Union's Vice President for Student Services & Dean of Students and has two daughters, Kate (6) and Carolyn (4). She is a recent contributor to *College Faith 2: 150 Christian Leaders and Educators Share Faith Stories from Their Student Days*. In addition, she speaks on women in leadership and serves on college student development leadership boards.

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