

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

7 Lies Christians in College Tell Themselves

By Moses Y. Lee

I don't know when or how it happened, but I picked up many lies about the Christian faith as a college student, lies that took years to recognize and repent of. Though it's been almost a decade since I graduated, I've noticed many Christians in college today tend to believe these same lies. Though certainly not unique to students, these seven lies seem especially present in this life stage and should be called out.

1. “I have to do what I feel is right or genuine.”

God created us, in his image, to be both rational and emotional. But when either becomes ultimate, we are not conforming to his image. This is why the ultimate authority of feelings, emotion, and “authenticity” for young people today is problematic. Emotions have a place, but they can be fickle liars. What “feels right” in our heart can actually be deception (Jer. 17:9). What seems “authentic” or “genuine” is not necessarily a reliable source of wisdom. The sooner we learn to critically evaluate our feelings, rather than follow them indiscriminately, the better.

2. “I must do something extraordinary with my life.”

If we're honest, what many of us really mean by this is “I want to be famous,” “I want to go viral,” or “I want to become an influencer.” But this attitude tends to downplay the everyday, “ordinary” forms of faithfulness—the single mom trying to raise kids while working three jobs, the full-time college student working late shifts to pay bills, the persevering small-town pastor who never gets a book deal. Are they not extraordinary too? Rather than burdening themselves with the expectation of fame, fortune, and influence, Christian college students should focus on seeing how ordinary faithfulness can be the most extraordinary calling of all.

3. “I'll stop feeling lonely if I get married.”

Single people don't have a monopoly on loneliness. Most spouses also feel lonely in their marriage at one point or another. In fact, if feeling lonely as a single person is difficult, feeling lonely as a married person can be even more challenging. The ultimate answer to loneliness isn't marriage or companionship; it's finding our complete satisfaction in Christ and our union with him (Ps. 17:15).

4. “My porn addiction will stop if I get married.”

Many young believers think their struggle with pornography will dissipate once they get married. But porn addictions don't merely stem from pent-up sexual desires; they stem from deeper desires—to be loved, accepted, affirmed—all of which find their ultimate fulfillment in our Father's love for us in Christ (Matt. 11:28; Col. 3:1-4). If we don't find freedom from porn in the gospel prior to getting married, this sin will doubtless wreak havoc on our marriages.

5. “I'm too busy for church this week.”

Life doesn't get any less stressful or less busy after college. I know investment bankers who work more than 90 hours a week and rarely, if ever, miss church on Sundays. The reality for busy college students is they can almost always study ahead, reschedule meetings, or go to sleep a little earlier to make time for church. Most of us were college students once. We all know from experience that if we really wanted to make time for church, we would (Heb. 10:25).

6. “I'll tithe when I get a real job or after I pay off my debt.”

Here's the reality: If I don't give sacrificially when I have little, I won't give sacrificially when I have a lot. For most of us, there will rarely be a time in our lives when we are debt-free—whether it's student loans, credit-card debt, or home mortgages. If we only give out of abundance, we'll never give, since we'll always be in debt. Generous giving must be a matter of discipline and principle (Mark 12:41-44), whether we have a little or a lot. If we don't learn this early on, we will struggle to prioritize giving later on.

7. “Church membership is optional for college students.”

The concept of church membership is foreign to many college students. To complicate the matter, some students may wonder why they should pursue membership at a church they can only attend for half of the year anyway (let alone attend after graduation). But the biblical case for membership has been well established, and college students are no exception to the rule. Whether it means maintaining a single membership, a seasonal membership, an auxiliary membership, or a dual membership (all of which can often be worked out by your college church and your home church, if they're two separate entities), we should never overlook our constant need for accountability from church elders.

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Are You Addicted to Your Phone?

Compulsive [kəm- 'pəl-siv] *adjective*: “resulting from or relating to an irresistible urge, especially one that is against one’s conscious wishes.” I’ve recently been thinking about compulsion, especially as it relates to one of the most incredible devices ever made: the smartphone. A little bit of self-analysis shows that the way I use my smartphone borders on compulsion and may, in fact, fully qualify. And from what I’ve observed, I suspect you may receive the same diagnosis. I ask myself all the time: Do I own this phone or does this phone own me? Who is setting the terms of the relationship? Which of us is making the demands and which of us is ceding to them?

A number of years ago, Dr. David Greenfield founded the Center for Internet and Technology Addiction and came up with a Smartphone Compulsion Test. He meant for it to draw attention to the way our lives can become dominated by our devices. I have found it both helpful and alarming. I’ve also adapted it a little to speak to the particular concerns of Christians. Why don’t you go through each question, answer *yes* or *no*, and keep track of the number of times you answer *yes*.

1. Do you often find yourself spending more time on your smartphone than you realize?
2. Do you find yourself spending more time texting, tweeting or emailing as opposed to speaking to people in person?
3. When you are bored or have nothing else to do, do you find yourself unconsciously reaching for your smartphone?
4. Has the amount of time you spend on your smartphone been increasing?
5. Do you wish you could be a little less involved with your smartphone?
6. Do you regularly sleep with your smartphone (turned on) under your pillow or next to your bed?
7. Do you find yourself viewing and answering texts, tweets and emails at any hour of the day or night—even when it means interrupting other things you are doing?
8. Do you text, email, tweet or surf while driving or doing other similar activities that require your focused attention and concentration?
9. Do you text, email, tweet or surf while walking?
10. Do you feel your use of your smartphone decreases your productivity at times?
11. Do notifications from your smartphone sometimes interrupt your attention during personal devotions, family devotions, or church services?
12. Do you feel uncomfortable when you accidentally leave your smartphone in the car or at home, have no service, or have a broken phone?
13. Do you use your smartphone while eating meals with others?
14. When your smartphone rings, beeps or buzzes, do you feel an intense urge to immediately respond to the notification (to check for texts, tweets, emails, updates, etc.)?
15. Do you find yourself mindlessly checking your cell or smartphone many times a day, even when you know there is likely nothing new or important to see?

According to Dr. Greenfield, the scoring system goes something like this: If you score 1-2, you’re probably doing just fine (but you probably also don’t actually own a smartphone). If you score 3-4, you are leaning toward compulsive or problematic behavior, and if you score 5 or above, that becomes almost certain. If you score 8 or higher, you probably have a pretty significant compulsive attachment to your phone. And my guess is at least half the people who honestly answer these questions fall into that camp.