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Christ and the College Student

John Allen Chalk

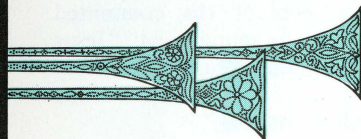
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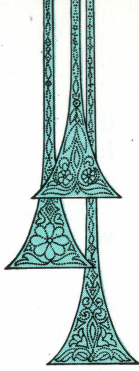
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Christ and the College Student



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HIGHLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST
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NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Christ and the College Student

Every major news magazine in America has featured them! Most major governments of the world have been threatened by them! At once we view them as the hope and the curse of tomorrow! I speak of the six million young men and women who will march back to the college classroom this month.

Today I want to talk both to and about the collegian. Adults believe that he will become more interested in God and his country as he grows older. He (or she) has probably given no thought to what God through Christ can do for his (or her) life. But the Jesus Christ I know and present today lives this very moment as surely as He lived nineteen hundred years ago. And make no mistake, He lived in the same realm of the flesh and blood that we know today. And He lives now by His own promise and by His Father's assurance, in the lives of His committed disciples. The *Epistle to the Hebrews* reminds us: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, yea and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). We talk about two current realities when we discuss "Christ and the College Student."

First, let's look at some statistics about our college-age generation. Four million young men and women were enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities in 1960. That number has increased, however, to six million today, and

should become eight to ten million by the end of the 1960's. It has been observed that the number of students in our colleges triples every twenty years. That's the first thing to consider: there are plenty of young men and women on today's campuses.

Two other figures might balance this view a little more. Whereas America's work force thirty years ago had only three college graduates in every hundred workers, that ratio has now changed to eighteen out of every hundred. By 1980 or so, it is estimated, thirty-five out of every hundred American workers will be graduates of a college or university. All of this says that whatever our young men and women get during these crucial college years will determine what kind of leadership and moral influence they lend to our world.

Young man, young women, these are not carefree, fun-loving days of irresponsibility! Your eternal welfare and the whole direction of our world will be directly affected by the convictions you form during the college years, by the faith you come to possess during these years of rapid maturity. One of the ancient world's most experienced and successful men advised: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity. Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; . . ." (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1).

Second, the college-age generation has been deeply affected by what is called "the new left." Since the first lunchcounter demonstrations in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February of 1960, young people of all races and backgrounds have become directly and personally involved in various "causes." Often, these efforts have degenerated into mob violence because many students did not properly inform themselves about the objectives of these "protests," and because many of them did not take the time to investigate why their involvement was so strongly urged! Unfortunately, the "new left" has not contributed to better racial harmony, to greater humanitarian effort, and to more responsible citizenship. The serious, intelligent student, looking for ways to meaningfully contribute to today's world, concentrates on his or her intellectual, moral, and spiritual preparation for life. In Paul's words, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:15-17, RSV).

Christ challenges you to accept and participate in the greatest "cause" the world has ever known — Christianity. To his followers Jesus says: "Ye are the salt of the earth: . . . Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16). Jesus' life provides the model for all concerned college students looking for a way to meaningful involvement in life. He waged ceaseless war on the same physical, moral, and spiritual blights that plague our world (Matthew 11: 4,5). This was God's plan for Him and is God's plan for you today. Jesus prayed to His Father what I hope you will soon be able to pray: "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do" (John 17:4).

Third, the college-age generation has some definite antipathies, some strong dislikes or hatreds. First on their negative list is "phoniness." It's at this point that most older people get checked off the student's list: college administrators, parents, governmental leaders, preachers and others. With a single-minded attachment to one idea, today's college student forgets the complexity of life. Since he does not feel comfortable with his inability to analyze all the factors affecting our world, and since he oftentimes has no integrating standard of reality and truth, this one commitment to some prominent but temporary cause grips him completely. Anyone who neither understands nor appreciates this cause to which the student has undividedly attached himself is therefore a "phony."

There was and is nothing "phony" about Jesus Christ. He was "the Word made flesh"—the power, life, and revelation of God to us (John 1:1-3). By His help, by the Word He gives you from God, all of life can be properly evaluated. Listen to what He does: "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:12-14).

Today's college student also has a strong dislike for organized society which seems to depersonalize and dehumanize modern man. The middle class, the liberals, the conservatives, religion, government, the college, family—all the social institutions of our day—are, in the student's mind, unconcerned about him (or her) as a person. An associate dean at the University of Southern California has written that today's student ". . . is no longer apathetic

and satisfied with his society; he is a person who wants action and seeks commitments which will have far-reaching effect upon tomorrow's world." (J. Wesley Robb, *The Christian*, October 24, 1965, p. 12.) A college chaplain said recently: "The student activists are challenging their professors, their politicians, their (preachers), to re-examine fundamental questions about society and their role in it, questions the older generation would like to believe have long since been answered." (Joseph L. Walsh, *Commonweal*, p. 207, November 19, 1965.)

Have you ever thought about how personal God got with the world? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God helped when we didn't know how to ask for help! He sent aid when we couldn't raise a hand to signal our need! While we were fighting ourselves and Him, God loved us in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross (Romans 5:6-10). That, my college friend, is getting personal! When you obediently receive God's offer of help and forgiveness, this kind of personal relationship with Christ develops: "I have been put to death with Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me" (Galatians 2:20, TEV).

The collegian also dislikes what he sees of life and reality in our time. Whether it is the Vietnam war, college regulations, moral standards, occupations and careers, or other everyday activities of modern life, the student looks and wonders: "Is it worth it?"; "What's life all about?"; "Must I act like everybody else?"; "Where's the world headed?" A former president of a famous girl's school has written that "today's students are seeking a sense of involvement in history." (Dr. Harold Taylor, *United Church Herald*, April 15, 1966, p. 24.)

We never come closer to the actual reason that Christ lived among men than when we examine the meaning of life. He said: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Jesus honestly and fairly faced life's cruelties and anxieties during His own lifetime. One New Testament writer says He bore every burden we will ever have to bear (Hebrews 4:14-16)! Jesus chides today's student for giving more thought to food than to life and more thought for clothes than what one does with his body (Matthew 6:25-34). He told us how to place all these concerns in their proper perspective: "Seek ye first his (God's) kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Fourth, most of today's students are influenced in two directions: the humanistic and the existential. Humanism on the college campus creates an atmosphere of self-centeredness which causes the student to say, "I am the center of reality." It is an influence which emphasizes man's might, man's progress, and even man's dilemma. Man has created the conditions that exist in today's world, and therefore, man can solve today's world difficulties, the humanist claims.

One never commits greater folly than when he attempts to understand himself without God. David realized this thousands of years ago when he asked, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:4). My college friend, life without God's direction, without a progressive realization of His image in your life, is catastrophe! Paul visualized it in the New Testament: "Whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:19).

The second powerful influence on college students is existentialism. The only reality, according to this thought, is man in action. Existence is the whole reality and essence of man. All the past is forgotten and all the future ignored in the blinding and all-consuming event of the moment! This philosophy encourages immorality and irresponsibility in the student. There are no lessons to be learned from yesterday and no tomorrow for which one ought to prepare according to this view of life. Every situation, each event of one's life is to be accepted and lived according to the dictates of one's own desires and wishes for that moment solely. No set pattern, certainly no rules of conduct, no frame of reference can be the same for all situations of life, the student is told.

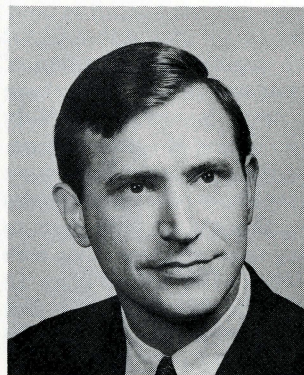
The Christian, however, treasures a promise from Christ that makes every situation meaningful and related to the whole of life. To all in every age who surrendered to His control and fulfill His plan for their lives, Jesus promises: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). I have claimed that promise, and today I sense its constraining and meaningful influence on my life. Instead of a directionless life overpowered and enslaved by circumstance, the Christian, at Paul's inspired advice, walks as a child of the light "in all goodness and righteousness and truth, providing what is well-pleasing to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:9, 10).

Humanism says to the college student: "You are god. Do as you wish, for you are the beginning and the end of all reality." God says: "Know ye not, that whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are

whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18).

Existentialism says to the college student: "Give no thought to moral principles and social norms. You are living in the reality of a single moment, a single isolated situation which is the only reality of your life. Let tomorrow take care of itself. It will bring a new situation and a new set of rules." God says: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth of his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:7, 8).

I ask you, as a college student in the midst of examining the great questions of all ages in the classroom, to consider the claims of Jesus Christ on your life. He says: "He that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:38, 39). "Lose" your life in obedience to Him who says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Then "lose" your life in selfless service to others, in loving involvement in a needy world, in fulfillment of God's plan for you—like Jesus Himself who urges us, "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: for the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).



John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.