

2026-08-06: New Stage in Life

Introduction

Today, as we welcome our new youth to the Youth Meeting, and as we start a new year in Sunday School & Youth Ministry, we want to reflect on this stage of life... college. For those who are new, it's a good look ahead, and for those who are already in college or grad school, it's a good retrospective.

How is this stage of life characterized?

Characteristics of the College & Grad Era

1. Discovery: Discovering your gifts, passions, calling
2. Transition: From dependence to adulthood
3. Preparation: Academic, Professional, Spiritual, Relational
4. Freedom: Make your own choices - you CHOOSE to come to the Youth Meeting
5. Formation: Establishing life-long habits, values, character
6. Flexibility: Fewer long-term commitments, flexible variant schedule
7. Learning: Learning about the things you like/enjoy/want to pursue, learning about life
8. Responsibility: Managing money, time, work, priorities
9. Health: Energy, health, ability
10. Decision: Decisions about career, decisions about moving, decisions about marriage

God in Everything

Now you are in the world with many responsibilities... work and career, school and education, service, family, friendships, etc. On top of that, I want to have some leisure, some relaxation, I need time for myself. How do I fit all of this in 24 hours? How do I fit God in with all of this? Even harder, how do I PRIORITIZE God in all of this?

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3)

What does it mean to "set your mind on things above?"

- I was talking to someone who said "I wish I could just leave my job and pray all day" - that is NOT what "set your mind on things above" means.
- St Antony, himself, who had gone into the desert and lived in a cave an ascetic life; who lived his life in prayer and fasting and scripture and meditation... got bored. And then the angel appeared to him wearing the monastic garbs and sat and weaved palms into baskets. Then the angel stood up to pray, and then returned to his work. And he kept repeating the process. Then, the angel said to him "Do this, and you will find rest for your

soul."

We will look at the day as three different times and three levels...

- Time Set Apart for God - Routine
- Time Offered to God - Responsibility
- Time Received from God - Rest

1 - Routine: Time Set Apart for God

Sometimes I try to do the MINIMUM to calm my conscience... things I've heard in confession... "I pray throughout the day" - GREAT! But what does that mean? Usually it means I don't pray with the Agpeya, I don't pray in the morning, and I don't pray in the evening. But I want to calm my conscience.

But if I am SERIOUS, the attitude will be different.

- "The difference between us and the saints is seriousness." - HHPS
- "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet." (Matthew 11:7-9) - SERIOUS
- The reality is that there is certain time of day that needs to be SET APART for God.
 - David was a king - many responsibilities... but he said "Seven times every day I will praise Your holy name."
- This is called a Spiritual Canon. Spiritual Rule. Spiritual Law. (vs. Spiritual Mood)
 - Structure that you follow in your spiritual life (prayer, Bible, prostration, fasting, etc.)
 - Structure/Discipline in life will extend to the rest of my life
 - 7am I will pray the 1st Hour
 - 5pm I will read the Scripture
 - 7pm I will pray the 12th Hour
 - The rest of the day fills itself around my spiritual canon

Components of the Spiritual Canon

1. Accountability Partner
2. Diary
3. Daily
 1. Morning Prayer
 2. Evening Prayer
 3. Prostrations
 4. Scripture Reading
4. Weekly
5. Monthly

2 - Faithfulness: God in my responsibilities

1. Work and Career - and not just the day-to-day but navigating a changing career landscape and being a little anxious about what's coming (e.g. AI, larger labor pool, less jobs) and trying to figure out how I will progress or get promoted or achieve my goals.
2. School and Education - things I still want to learn - specializations I want to enter - apprenticeships or fellowships or internships I want to participate in
3. Service - serving in the Church; serving my community; volunteering in any organization
4. Family - my parents and my in-laws and my cousins and my siblings and their families
5. Relationship - my wife, or my fiancée, or the person I am courting for marriage, my children

How is success defined?

- Lots of money?
- Happy wife? Happy husband?

Faithfulness

- Being honest in my work - not taking someone else's work as my own; not using AI where it's not appropriate; not trying to do "just the minimum requirements" but going above and beyond; not cheating on my timecard; not cheating in my work from home
- Being honest in my school
- Being honest in my service - doing the best of my ability; not taking shortcuts; not trying to do the "minimum"
- Being honest with my wife - giving her the time that she deserves; giving her the listening ear; giving her love and showing her love and loving her in front of others; not keeping secrets from her; doing my role as a husband to lead her in the spiritual life and being a man saying "let's read the Bible together" - "come and pray with me before we sleep" - "I'll pray for us before this meal."
- Being honest with my husband - not being lazy; not criticizing him in everything he does; being thankful for him and showing him my gratitude; submitting to him - especially when he is leading me in the way of godliness. Imagine a husband who wakes his wife for church and she says no or "I'm gonna sleep a little longer." Respecting him.
- Giving time to my parents; going and helping them when they need it

3 - Rest: Sinless Leisure Time

St Anthony story

- Lawful?
- Edifying?
- Controlling?
- Stumbling Block?

Hobbies

Social Time and Hangouts

- Hookah bar?
- Drinks at a restaurant?
- Music and Dance concerts?
- Sin...

Vacation = vacation from God? From Church? Definitely not...

- When I'm traveling, I search in advance for the nearest church and check their schedule
- I'm going to a place that doesn't have a church? Then I'm going from Mon-Fri - not missing Vespers or Liturgy
- When I travel on vacation, I wake up for my spiritual canon every day
- Can you imagine that there are people who go to Egypt and don't attend a single liturgy, or don't visit a monastery? They are going to eat Shawarma and go to the beach and all that
 - Or go to Egypt and don't fast on Wed and Fri or go during the Apostles Fast and don't fast at all
 - Or go to a Cruise during the Great Fast...
- I'm going to Egypt for 3 weeks but I serve a Sunday School Class
 - I'm checking on the kids while I'm gone
 - I'm offering to help remotely with an activity or with a homework or a phone call or a follow-up

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