

Parenthood (23): Dad's Rules for School

April 1996

A *Christian father gave his son the following advice when leaving for college:*
Pray every day.
Read your Bible every day.
Study hard and do the best you can academically.
Be a good example to others.
Don't forget your brother. He looks up to you.
Take care of yourself physically.
Call home regularly.
Don't miss church services, no matter how busy you are.
Remember Mom; she will miss you greatly.
Stay away from kids bent on getting into trouble.
Always put God first.
Never forget how much I love you.
Remember who you are and where you are going.

When I first left the cozy confines of home for university life I was a few months shy of eighteen. I had been raised by strong Christian parents, my academic background was sound and finances were adequate. My mother had encouraged independent decision-making and was supportive in every way.

We drove the 130 miles to Tampa, and Mom went to the grocery store and bought enough to stock the pantry and fridge in our apartment. All too soon it was time for her to leave for home, and suddenly I had what I had been yearning for: *freedom!* But oh how painful that freedom was sometimes. I experienced a period of social awkwardness and searing loneliness which makes me thankful to this day for the companionship of my wife and children.

I found myself on a downward spiral of self-pity, debilitating idleness and bitter criticism until a few of my friends declared me a reclamation project and helped get my feet on solid ground and pointed in the right direction. For them I am eternally grateful.

Upon reflection, one of the biggest blessings was that I *never* voluntarily missed an assembly of the church. While I wasn't always doing or being what I should, this constant connection with Christians kept my conscience tender and gave me access to the people who could give me the kind of help I needed.

College years are full of financial, academic, social, emotional and spiritual challenges. May we parents work to equip our children to handle independence. What basic skills and principles will they remember most when in the heat of battle?