

heartSpeak

a brave new world

Keeping the faith when you've left home

BY LAURA CORTEZ

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I remember dancing with a friend to a live band in a bar, drink in hand. I spun around and stopped face to face with a guy I knew — one who knew me as the Christian Laura, not as a half-drunk friend.

Later, as I lay awake in bed, I had a nagging feeling I had finally been busted. This was what I had to show for my three years away at college.

OK, now I've said it: I didn't exactly do a great job keeping my faith when I left home. Back then, I had my room packed in a trailer and my heart and mind stuffed with a false confidence in my faith, ready to take on the world. I thought I'd start going to church and that everything in San Antonio would be as it was back home. Yeah, right!

I never imagined Satan had prepared a legion of demons to bring me down. Within three or four months, I knew all the hot spots in the new city. My rookie faith was no match against a seasoned battalion. I thought

I was a strong enough Christian but was afraid to ask for help when I slipped. I felt like a failure.

Since the "fall" of 2004, God has worked all my mistakes for good. To all of you soon to depart home, here you go, straight from the Man himself.

ASK FOR DIRECTIONS

What was the first thing Jesus did when He left home to live out His destiny? Find the cheapest place to eat? Seek a group to join in the town square? Check out all the chicks in the local temple? No! He went into the desert for some one-on-one with His Dad. Praying, fasting. He sought to know His Father's plan.

Think you know what God wants from your life? Better be sure, 'cuz someone in that wilderness will surely tempt you to change it — not for the better. Before you set out on your dreams, try prayer and fasting. I'm not talking about having no food because you can't figure out the kitchen like your mom does. I mean honest fasting with intentional prayer, fully expecting God will answer. Check out Matthew 4 and Luke 4.

MIND YOUR BUSINESS

The first time we see Jesus away from His parents, He's only twelve and still living at home. But He already had the right idea. When Mary scolded Him, Jesus

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Seniors

HELLO SENIORS

WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF LIFE BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL. OH YES, THIS IS YOUR RIGHT OF PASSAGE. YOU'VE REACHED THE PROVERBIAL CROSSROADS INTO A NEW STAGE IN LIFE. FOR THE PAST YEAR YOU'VE BEEN AT THE TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN, BUT IN A FEW WEEKS YOU'LL RETURN ONCE AGAIN TO THE STATUS OF ROOKIE. SO HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO KEEP YOU FROM GETTING EATEN ALIVE OUT THERE.



5 successful tips for getting through college

KNOW YOURSELF

It's important to know what you can do and work with it. If you're not a morning person, don't take an 8 a.m. class. If you're not a good writer, take only one writing-intensive class per semester until you improve. If you're a leader, look for opportunities like group projects. Spreading yourself too thin can cause you to settle for just good enough grades.

OFFICE HOURS

The easiest way to get behind in school is to not ask questions. Most professors will give you times when you can visit their offices one-on-one. Take our advice: USE THEM! Professors want you to pass; if you're struggling, they will help you. It's their job.

DO YOUR BASICS EARLY

Most of these classes are extensions of courses you took in high school, but you still have to take them. The further along you get in school, the more you'll want to focus on your major and the less likely you'll want to take something like college algebra.

MAKE FRIENDS

College is hard enough, so I'm always trying to find ways to make it easier. One thing that works is making friends, but not just anyone. You need those two or three friends who will support you in your studies. Finding them can be a huge difference in making college life less complicated.

TEXTBOOKS ARE EXPENSIVE

Costs for college textbooks can kill you, so listen up. First, plan to spend about \$200-\$300 each semester. Whether it's financial aid or your own cash, that's a nice chunk of change. Second, don't buy early. Some profs use books like air; others never crack it open. Before shelling out the dough, go to your first day of class and ask if you'll need the assigned textbook. Professors know the cost and will try to spare you if they can. Then try buying from Web sites like Amazon.com or Half.com. Don't forget the shipping time that might set you back. Again, timing is everything.

finding purpose

BY ISAI MELGOSA

Sitting in Sabbath school, I reach over and grab my mother's Bible. It's highlighted with notes in margins and small drawings to illustrate what she reads. On the first blank page is this handwritten note: "I was designed for the purpose of pleasing my Maker."

Deciding on a degree plan for college, I chose to prepare for helping those who need healing and those who don't have rights. I finished my bachelors degree with a major in psychology and minor in Christian studies, and now I'm working with inner city youth who have been labeled and forgotten. They are youth who cause people to cross the street, live on the streets, or deal drugs in an alley. Some are

raised by grandparents while their parents do jail time or get high.

Soon I will complete my masters of arts in counseling — another tool to help others through counseling in marriage and family and chemical dependency. By next fall, I hope to begin a doctorate in psychology. That will continue a life-long calling for me.

Like my mother, I believe that "I was designed for the purpose of pleasing my Maker." Many young people beginning college have an important choice to make. Will you allow God to move through you, or have you made your own plans and put God on the sideline?

Campus Ministries

BY NATURE, COLLEGE CAMPUSES ARE VERY MULTICULTURAL — HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS WITH JUST AS MANY DIFFERENT BELIEFS. FINDING A PLACE WHERE OTHERS SHARE YOUR PASSION FOR CHRIST AND WHERE YOUR FAITH IS CULTIVATED CAN BE AN INCREDIBLE WAY TO MAKE YOUR COLLEGE CAREER MORE SUCCESSFUL. HERE ARE A FEW CAMPUS MINISTRIES WORTH LOOKING INTO.

Chi Alpha

Though it sounds like a fraternity, Chi Alpha equips students to transform the university, the marketplace, and the world. Through worship, small groups, and social activity, it creates a great environment for students — not to mention their sweet-looking Web site. www.chialpha.com

Campus Crusade for Christ

One of the oldest and most recognizable ministries, CRU (as it is known for short) has spread to countless campuses. CRU's mission is to connect with every student — a great way to get involved. www.campuscrusadeforchrist.com

Baptist Collegiate Ministries

Found on many campuses — private or public, community or four-year — they host noon lunches and evening worship to reach students, Baptist or otherwise. www.bcmlife.net

Single-campus ministries

At almost every college, ministries specific to that campus will likely exist. Visit your college's Web site, search campus organizations, or just keep your eyes and ears open: A good campus ministry will make its presence known.

Most campus ministries are affiliated with denominations, so visit their meetings, talk to the leaders, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Also, get plugged in to your church's college-age ministry; it may be just as valuable as a campus ministry. If your church doesn't have a college ministry, start one!



said, "How is it that you had to look for Me? Did you not see and know that it was necessary . . . for Me to be in My Father's house and . . . about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49, *Amplified*).

If you want to be faithful, then be about God's business — anything from a church ministry with accountability to serving in the community. Remember, if your hands aren't busy doing your heavenly Father's work, Satan will certainly put them to do his.

KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE AND YOUR BFF'S CLOSER

On most college campuses, you'll find about every type of person. Just think of one type you would never expect to encounter there, and they will be sitting next to you in your American Lit class — I promise. It's OK to talk to them. In fact you might learn something, and they can learn from you. When you're on your own, I hope you'll meet and get to know a variety of people. But when it comes to the people who will greatly influence you, please be selective.

When Jesus chose the twelve men He would later entrust His gospel to, He did so with great purpose. He needed people who were like-minded and would give their lives for Him . . . eventually. Your inner circle, your family away from family,

should be those who will hold you accountable for your actions, support you during tough times, and pull you away from the fire when you get too close.

Still think you're ready to fly solo? I'm not going to lie to you: It's difficult, it's fun, and you'll be tempted to do anything and everything. Satan wants you to think you're strong enough to resist them all, but you aren't. You will have many pop quizzes of the soul and will probably fail some of them.

But God's love can reach even further than you can fall. You can learn something from everything you experience, even the most mundane. Don't trust in your own ability to remain faithful or in your plans for your future. Trust in the calling God is placing on your heart and His promise: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33b, NIV).

Laura Cortez is a middle school teacher in San Antonio, TX, where she lives with her husband, David.

inside the nfyc

NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK AND HUNGER LOCK-IN

April 17-19, 2009 (Suggested. If this weekend doesn't work for your church, pick any weekend through June 30.)

This is a great way to get your church involved in foreign missions — without the travel! Half the money raised goes to help build an orphanage school in Ghana. If each church donates only \$50, we'll pay for the school's foundation. Individuals can send offerings (marked "Hunger Lock-In") directly to the Denver office, whether or not your group gets involved.

Packets have been sent to all local youth workers and are available through the NFYC office. Contact Kurt Lang, NFYC director, at nfyc@cog7.org.

CONNECT. GROW. THRIVE. HOW?

- Sign up for weekly *Youth Flash* newsletter at <http://cog7.org/mailman/listinfo/youth>. Don't miss another issue!
- Sign up for cell phone text list, and we'll send a daily verse, joke, thoughts to ponder — a little something each day to remind you of God. E-mail your name (first, last), cell phone carrier, and number to nfyc@cog7.org.

THE ENCOUNTER

July 6-11, 2009
Corpus Christi, Texas
Is your soul ready?

COMING UP

SIS-Q Meadows Senior Youth Camp
July 19-26, 2009
SIS-Q Meadows, OR, campground
Contact: Harold Ogren, camp director
(hogren@msn.com or 541-689-1387)

For a complete list of events, go to <http://nfyc.cog7.org>.

ATTENTION SENIORS!

If you are a high school senior, ready to graduate in 2009, the National FYC would like to give you a gift! Please e-mail your name and address to nfyc@cog7.org, along with what local CoG7 church you attend, and we will send you a Congratulations 2009 DVD from Interlinc. (Available to residents of the U.S. and Canada only.)