



Fall 2004 *Go! Online* Bible Study

## Rock Solid Faith

### Materials:

- *Go! Online* Download Video: *Rock Solid*
- Computer, monitor or video projector to display video
- One copy of *Go! Online* Group Activity for *Rock Solid* for each student
- Copies of Fall 2004 *Go!* magazine for each student (unless they've already been distributed)

### Introduction:

[Note: This study is aimed at high school seniors preparing to go to college. Consider holding a special meeting for that group or customizing this lesson to apply to all of your students.]

Stats tell us that you probably know some teens who displayed strong faith in God in high school—students who you might even have thought of as spiritual leaders—who seemed to have abandoned their faith (or at least their fire for Christ) after a few semesters at college.

It doesn't just happen when students go off to secular universities. The transition from high school to college is a major shift in any life. It creates pressures that will test the reality of your students' faith and their willingness to stand for what they believe. Because the newfound freedoms that come with college often provide newfound temptations, even students planning to attend Christian colleges need to make sure they are grounded in the Word before they start and that they have a plan to stay grounded once they get there.


Part of that preparation is mental. Christian students need to be able to explain (to themselves, at least) why they believe as they do. What makes faith in Jesus and trust in the reliability of God's Word reasonable?

This study, however, will focus on making spiritual preparations for the transition to college. It's meant as a companion to the article "Rock Solid" on page 26 of the Fall 2004 issue of *Go!* magazine. Encourage your students to read the article when they have time as you distribute their copies of the new issue.

In this study, you'll present six spiritual areas students can purposely plan to focus on when making the transition to college. Begin by saying something like this:

**Your first year out of high school might be one of the most crucial years of your life. That doesn't mean it won't be fun.**





**Your new freedom will bring opportunities to do things you've never done before. You'll make lots of friends. And you might sleep less, laugh more and work harder than at any other time in your life.**

**But if you're not prepared, your first year in college can be rough on your relationship with God. I'm sure we all know people who seemed like strong Christians before going to college and then either lost interest in God or rejected Him completely. That doesn't have to happen. Going to school—even a secular university—can be an opportunity to deepen your faith in God. But you've got to be prepared.**

**Today, we're going to look at six areas you can focus on during your first few weeks and months at college to give yourself the best chance to have a great college life and stay close to God.**

### **1. Practice repentance**

We all struggle with sin, especially when we're young. Being a Christian means that we realize we need saving, not that we've all graduated to perfection. When you trusted in Christ for salvation, your sins were forgiven and God began the process of making you like Jesus. But you're not there, yet.

For some of you, college is a chance to ditch some of the nagging sins that have been slowing you down throughout high school. Others will face new temptations in college that might trip you up. Either way, your first year of college is a great time to practice the biblical concept of repentance.

The word *repentance* literally means to change direction or make a 180-degree turn. If you're going south and Starbucks is two miles north, you've got to turn around to get there. (Or just wait ten minutes and they'll build one right next to you.)

Repentance from sin isn't just a one-time thing that happens when we get saved. It's a lifestyle of making sure we're following in Jesus' steps. When we realize that our choices are taking us in the wrong direction, it's time to repent from that sin and get back on the path He set for us.

Do you practice repentance in your life right now? Do you ask God to help you spot sinful choices you're making? When you realize that you've wandered into impurity or lying or dishonoring your parents, what do you do about it?

Too many Christians would rather just ignore the sin in their lives than deal with it. It's no fun to admit when we have a sinful problem, and it's hard to go in a new direction. But that pain—that sadness—serves a good purpose.

Listen to what Paul told the Corinthians about repentance. In a previous letter, he had warned them about something sinful they were doing. Now that they had dealt with it, he wrote this:

“Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance” (2 Corinthians 7:8-9, NIV).

Dealing with the sadness of sin in our lives motivates us to repent—to start moving in the other direction. Once we admit the sin, thank God for His forgiveness, and turn around, our life with God becomes exciting and new again.

Listen to how Paul’s readers were changed after repenting from their sinful choices:

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done” (2 Corinthians 7:10-11, NIV).

There will never be a better time in your life to practice repentance before God than right now. Ask Him to help you see anything in your life that doesn’t please Him. When He does, admit that those choices are wrong. Thank Him for His forgiveness, then repent—move in the other direction. Leave the sin behind. Don’t take it with you to college.

And when you get to school, be prepared to practice repentance on a regular basis as you make choices that will set the course for the rest of your life.

## **2. Get in the Word**

At college, you might spend a lot of time at the cafeteria. You’ll hear all about the “freshman 15,” and you’ll see lots of examples of students growing more than just their minds.

And you’ll need that good food. Without nutrition, your body won’t survive the stress of a big class load or all the hours you’ll need to work to pay your way through school. What’s baffling is that so many Christian students think they’re faith can grow and thrive without regularly feeding from God’s Word.

When Jesus was tempted by Satan to do something wrong, He said this: “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, HCSB).

Whether you go to a Christian school or a secular one, your college years will be full of conflicting ideas from TV, movies, professors, books and friends. Without regular input from the Word of God, it will be easy to lose your grip on what’s true and what’s error.

In the battle for truth, Paul called the Word of God a sword that Christians should use for self-defense (Ephesians 6:17)—just like Jesus did with Satan.

Do you have a regular time to study God’s Word now? Do you have a plan for one in college?



### **3. Look for a mentor**

If you watched much of the Olympics this past summer, you might have noticed that lots of the star athletes had a personal coach or trainer. One gold medal sprinter was being coached by a former gold medal winner in the same events. A beach volleyball player actually talked another former star into coaching her and playing with her in competition.

It's not just a good idea in sports. The Bible models the same approach to walking with God. Jesus mentored (or "discipled") 12 guys who went on to change the world for God. Paul mentored several younger men, including Timothy.

And Paul wrote this to the less mature Christians in the town of Philippi: "Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9, HCSB).

College can be a war of ideas and a battle to stay on track with God. Proverbs says, "Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance" (Proverbs 20:18, NIV).

If you want to excel in your relationship with God while you're going to school, you'll have a better shot with a good coach. Ask God to help you find someone older than you who has proven him- or herself to be faithful to God and lived wisely in a situation similar to the one you'll be facing in school.

Then be bold and ask that person if he or she (your own gender is best) would be willing to take the time to meet with you regularly to help you be successful in following God's path for you through college.

Look for someone you can go to to talk about both relationship issues and worldview conflicts. Ask God to place in your life a man or woman worth patterning yourself after.

### **4. Find a church**

This one might seem obvious, but a surprising number of Christian students just stop going to church once they get to college. Others try a church or two, but don't keep going. And the truth is that it's hard to look for a church and pick one that you think you can fit into.

For one thing, no new church is going to feel as comfortable and welcoming as this one where you're already part of the family. It's going to start out kind of foreign, like going to a new school. But it doesn't have to stay that way.

To make it easier, talk a friend into joining you in your quest for a good church—maybe one that has a good college group or sponsors a Christian college ministry on your campus.

It's worth the effort. Part of the reason that you've done as well as you have in walking with God through high school is this church—this group of believers that you're a part of. We grow strong together by worshiping God, praying together, studying the Word and just encouraging each other.

God's plan for making believers strong and faithful in a hostile world is the church family. Sometimes college can be a hostile or, at least, lonely place. A good church can be a retreat to give you the strength to keep going.

The writer of Hebrews said, "And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25, HCSB).

Don't let college be the reason you start "staying away" from the strength available through God's family.

### **5. Give yourself away**

Check out this quote by Tamie Vervoorn from the article called "Rock Solid" on p. 26 of the Fall 2004 issue of *Go!* magazine:

"Have you ever heard the analogy about the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee? These two prominent bodies of water are located only miles from each other, yet one is teeming with life and the other is, well, dead. Why? They both have an inlet, yet only the Sea of Galilee has an outlet. Water flows into the Dead Sea and stays there, stagnant. It breeds no life. Water flows in and out of the Sea of Galilee and it flourishes."


One of the best ways to keep your faith on solid ground in college is to get involved in ministry yourself. It's great to go to a college group and listen to good teaching, but that's not enough. Ephesians 2:10 says that you were created to do good works.

Ideas: See if your campus group needs help with organization or leadership. Many local churches are desperate for volunteer sponsors for their middle school and high school groups. Or maybe you could get involved in an outreach program sponsored by an evangelism ministry.

The big point is do *something*. Don't just become a sponge in college; find a way to put what you're learning as you walk with God into practice by serving others.

### **6. Choose your friends wisely**

One of the best things about going to college is the friends you make while you're there. Late nights spent hanging out, driving around, laughing, drinking too much coffee while studying. You might hold on to some of those friends for the rest of your life.



When choosing which friends you'll spend the most time with, the biggest question is influence. Every relationship involves influence in both directions. If the choices of a particular group of friends tend to pull you away from your closeness to God, you're losing the influence battle.

One lie of our culture is that friendship matters more than anything else. As Christians, we believe that top priority belongs to our relationship with God. No friendship is worth picking up habits or attitudes that don't please Him.

On the other hand, God might use you to influence people at college who don't share your beliefs—even non-Christians. There's no reason to avoid unbelievers. In fact, you won't have much chance to influence your campus for Christ if you don't make friends with people who don't believe in Him or follow Him closely. Why will anyone ask you about your hopeful lifestyle if they don't get to know you (1 Peter 3:15)?

Remember: It's in our relationships that we have the most opportunity to imitate God's love and leading in our lives.

**Group Activity:**

Hand out copies of the *Go! Online* group activity for this study. You should have one for each student. Explain the following in your own words:

**Okay, we've looked at six things each of you can do in your first few months at college to make sure you have a great time without slipping in your relationship with God. This sheet is just a reminder that you'll need to find a way to keep doing the things that have helped you stay close to God in high school.**

Walk through the sheet with your students, helping them to identify what they're doing now in each area. Then encourage them to either make a fresh start in those areas in college to keep going strong in each one.

**Video Conclusion:**

To wrap up your session together, play the *Go! Online* download video *Rock Solid*. It's 2 minutes, 24 seconds long, and it features a Christian college student talking about each of the six points covered in this study. It's designed to reinforce one more time how important each of these areas is.

After the video, allow a few minutes for discussion about the transition from high school to college and what concerns your students might have about that.

Close in prayer, mentioning those concerns to God as you ask Him to help each of your students to walk even more closely with Him as they move through high school to college in the coming years.

On their way out, remind your students one more time to check out the article “Rock Solid” in the Fall 2004 issue of *Go!* magazine for more ideas about stress and how to deal with it.

*Copyright © 2004, North American Mission Board, 4200 North Point Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30022, [www.go.studentz.com/leader](http://www.go.studentz.com/leader)*

