

“*Welcome to College* has been my go-to book for helping students prepare to succeed spiritually, relationally, and academically in college. No other book has such depth and balance. And I am thrilled that Jonathan has written a timely and helpful update, incorporating many of the biggest issues students face today. This book is a must-read for all Christian students who hope to have a vibrant faith in college.”

—SEAN MCDOWELL, best-selling author, speaker,  
and professor at Biola University

“I know of no other book that has the breadth and depth of *Welcome to College* to help us equip the next generation with the truth. . . . My own kids will certainly have a copy in their hands as they step onto the college campus.”

—BRETT KUNKLE, student impact director at Stand to Reason (str.org)

“In this updated second edition, Jonathan has improved an already excellent resource by adding the latest evidence for theism and Christianity and including critical discussions of controversial social and moral issues. If you’re a student, don’t you dare enter college until you’ve allowed Jonathan Morrow to prepare you. *Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower’s Guide for the Journey* is essential to your success at university.”

—J. WARNER WALLACE, cold-case detective, author of *Cold-Case Christianity*, and adjunct professor at Biola University

“If I could give just one apologetics book to a Christian going off to college, it is this one. Jonathan Morrow goes well beyond providing evidence for Christianity (as most such books do)—he provides succinct and sound answers to the kinds of moral and emotional issues that often trip up Christian college students. Highly recommended!”

—FRANK TUREK, broadcaster and author of *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* and *Correct, Not Politically Correct*

“*Welcome to College* is easily the best resource for any Christian student who wants not just to survive college but to thrive on campus as an ambassador for Christ. No other book better equips young people for the challenges that lie ahead. I cannot recommend it enough!”

—SCOTT KLUSENDORF, president of Life Training Institute and author of *The Case for Life: Equipping Christians to Engage the Culture*

## Praise for the First Edition

“*Welcome to College* addresses the most significant issues college students encounter with intelligent, practical wisdom. It will be of immense value to anyone making the adjustment to the exciting challenges these fast-paced years present.”

—K. ERIK THOENNES, professor at Biola University and pastor at  
Grace Evangelical Free Church

“Wow! What a book! Quite frankly, this is the book I’ve been waiting for the last forty years to give to college students. It is the single best volume I have ever read for preparing students to follow Jesus and flourish as His disciples in college.”

—J. P. MORELAND, author and distinguished professor of philosophy  
at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“Unpacking biblical truths, *Welcome to College* is a treasure book of wisdom that will literally save lives and help build a culture of life.”

—KELLY MONROE KULLBERG, founder of The Veritas Forum  
and author of *Finding God Beyond Harvard*

“Jonathan Morrow has both the intellectual resources and the practical experience to provide an effective students’ survival guide to university life. I’m impressed with the wide array of issues he discusses, from intellectual challenges to financial problems to sexual snares to getting enough sleep! All this is done in easily digestible bits for the student on the run.

This is a book I wish I could have given to my two kids when they went off to college!”

—WILLIAM LANE CRAIG, theologian, professor of philosophy,  
and author of *Reasonable Faith*

“Jonathan Morrow has written an extremely practical, insightful guide for navigating the challenges of college life. It is wide-ranging and wise. I enthusiastically recommend it!”

—PAUL COPAN, Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics  
at Palm Beach Atlantic University

“Whether you are an incoming freshman or upperclassman, Jonathan provides straightforward, practical insight for dealing with current issues re-

garding living the Christian life on campuses everywhere. Not only is this a great read but you will find a place to turn to when questions or struggles show their face.”

—TAYLOR MCCABE, film and digital media student at Baylor University

“This book will prepare anyone who is either enrolled in college or is planning to go to college for the daily challenges Christians deal with on campus. Jonathan Morrow is aware of the real college world and is dead-on with his excellent insight.”

—BLAKE SMITH, construction engineering technology student  
at Texas Tech University

“Reading this book is like having your own personal mentor and friend to guide you through the rough rapids of college life. College is a great experience, but it can also be faith-shattering if you are not adequately prepared. This book is perfect for the high school senior who is curious about what college life will be like. It is also helpful for the college student who is dealing with the day-to-day challenges and questions faced both in and out of the classroom.”

—MARK SCHMAHL, pastor of student ministries at Believers’ Chapel

“With a refreshing mix of good humor and common sense, Jonathan Morrow guides the reader through the practical, intellectual, and moral thickets of beginning college. He writes as an older brother whose knowledge of the territory is recent and realistic. In short, readable chapters he covers all the expected issues and a good number of unexpected ones as well. Here is wisdom, not legalism. I highly recommend this book!”

—GARRETT DEWEESE, professor at large at Talbot School of Theology,  
Biola University

“Jonathan Morrow has provided a solid resource to Christian college students across the country. *Welcome to College* touches on many, if not all, of the major issues believers face on campus. The resources concluding each chapter are invaluable.”

—B. J. WALTON, former men’s discipleship coordinator at Biola University

“Christian students will be able to pick this up year after year and learn something new each time. It has the ability to connect with you no matter where you’re at on your journey.”

—KIM BOIKO, Biola University graduate

**Also by Jonathan Morrow**

*Is God Just a Human Invention? And Seventeen Other  
Questions Raised by New Atheists*

*Think Christianly: Looking at the Intersection of Faith and Culture*  
*Questioning the Bible: 11 Major Challenges to the Bible's Authority*

# WELCOME TO COLLEGE

SECOND EDITION

**A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S  
GUIDE FOR THE JOURNEY**

**JONATHAN MORROW**

 **Kregel**  
*Publications*

*Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey*

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*For Mandi: There is no one I would rather be  
on the journey with than you.*

*For Austin, Sarah Beth, and Madison:  
My prayer for you is that you would love and follow  
Jesus with courage and confidence all the days of your life,  
and that the words and ideas in this book may  
encourage you on this journey. I love you.*

*And for Brandon Garcia—a recent graduate—  
who wanted to write a book for college students one day.  
While he never got the opportunity to be formally published,  
the text of his life remains with the many who knew him.  
I dedicate this book to his memory, and celebrate his  
passion for God, life, thinking well, and pursuing authentic  
manhood. Brandon is now home, but is still missed.*





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## Foreword

MANY STUDENTS TEND TO APPROACH THE COLLEGE SELECTION PROCESS as if they were choosing a vacation spot. Other than confirming a chosen field of study, the questions they ask are somewhat shortsighted. Are the accommodations nice? How's the food? Is there on-campus entertainment? What about the football team?

These questions matter, of course. After all, it's no small commitment to spend a semester or two—or eight—at a particular place. In a very real sense, students are choosing where they are going to live. But going to college is less like choosing a vacation spot than it is committing to a four-year brain and heart surgery.

Many students simply are not prepared for the ideas, experiences, and relationships that will challenge their faith and shape their future. They will be stretched in unexpected ways, form habits of study and thinking, and embrace some vision of life that will lead them to either flourish or flounder. Away from the security of home, they will be forced to handle money, philosophies, roommates, temptation, and (at times) failure, all on their own.

That's why we worry about them. College is supposed to be something good, but we've seen too many casualties of campus life. We've read the headlines about rape culture, binge drinking, ideological indoctrination, and discrimination against students and faculty with Christian convictions. And we've heard the statistics, some of which are exaggerated, of how many students walk away from their Christian faith at college.

Well, I've got good news for the parents, youth pastors, mentors, and influencers who want to see the next generation successfully navigate the challenges of college. Students can tackle this new stage of life and emerge on the other side ready to make the most of the talents God has gifted to them and build a meaningful and faithful life. They don't have to be casualties.

Students can emerge smarter, sharper, and better followers of Christ after college.

In fact, I've met many who have, and so has Jonathan Morrow. As you will see in the pages ahead, *Welcome to College* is a clear, practical, and comprehensive guide to college life. I know of no better book you can put into the hands of a young Christian headed to college. Jonathan's many years of working with high school and college students is on full display here. He's what the author of Proverbs calls "a wise counselor," in everything from dealing with the intellectual assaults on Christianity and cultivating time-management skills to resolving relational conflict with peers and professors.

I've recommended *Welcome to College* for years and am happy to recommend it now to you and to the student you love.

John Stonestreet, 2017  
President, Colson Center  
for Christian Worldview

## Preface to the Second Edition

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

—3 JOHN 4 (ESV)

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT EIGHT YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE INITIAL publication of *Welcome to College*. Nearly 25,000 copies have been sold to date and I've been so encouraged by the response of readers who have shared how this material has helped equip them to follow Jesus in their college years with more confidence. I am grateful to God for the impact this book has had because my heart and passion is for students to walk in the truth. But as I talked with the publisher it became clear it was time to update this book for the young adults now heading into college. I am thankful that the majority of the first edition's content is as relevant today as when I first wrote it. But some updating of illustrations, evidence, and resources was needed. Also, there are questions students now wrestle with that weren't as much of an issue a decade ago, so I included some new material on topics such as how social media is affecting us as individuals and as a culture, how to think about Christianity and homosexuality, and how Christians should deal with marijuana even when it's legal.

After twelve years of speaking to and working with thousands of students at camps and conferences, in churches, and on campuses, I am more convinced than ever of the importance of the high school and college years in setting the trajectory for a life of following Jesus. There are real intellectual, moral, spiritual, and relational challenges. Students need to know what they believe as Christians, why they believe it, and how to live it out. Just because a student goes to church or attends youth group does not mean they are ready to follow Christ in today's culture. Mere attendance isn't cutting it; training is needed. Knowledge of the truth matters more than ever. And students need

to know that they are not alone on this journey. They need encouragement to stand firm in a confused culture.

Some people are critical of this generation and believe students will not think about tough questions. My experience has shown the opposite to be true. Today's students are rejecting a cotton-candy Christianity filled with empty clichés and slogans. They are eager to be challenged and to engage the big questions of life, and they long for their lives to matter. It is my hope and prayer that the chapters in this book will help young adults build a lasting faith and will prepare them for a lifetime of following Jesus.

For today's generation,  
Jonathan Morrow, 2017



## Along the Way

COLLEGE IS AN INTERESTING PLACE.

I mean this both sarcastically and literally. You will see things in college that you never thought you'd see. You will also see stuff you would have rather not seen! You will meet lots of different kinds of people—some you'll like, some you won't. You will learn new things while in college (your parents will be glad to know this, even though much of it will happen outside the classroom), and you will be exposed to the wonderful world of ideas—for better or for worse. There will be good times, awkward moments, ups and downs, late nights and early mornings . . . a lot like your life already.

These four or five years will arguably be the most significant years of your life when it comes to determining the kind of person you'll be in the future and what kind of life you will lead. It is during these years that you lay the tracks your life will run along. No curfews . . . no parents . . . this is a whole new ball game (and for some—like me—a fresh start). So, what are you going to make of it? You are part of the privileged few who get the opportunity to go to college. While there has been an increase over the last decade, only about 7 percent of the world's population has the opportunity you have at this moment. How will you spend it? And if you are a Christian, what does it look like to spend it Christianly? (More on this later.)

We will cover many topics that will be important for you to think about during your college experience. To whet your appetite, here is just a sample of some of the issues and questions we will be talking about together:

- How do you grow spiritually?
- How can you discover what you are supposed to do with your life?
- How do you build and share your faith in a hostile environment?
- How do you manage your time so that you can study and have fun?

- Is all truth relative?
- Are there good reasons to be a Christian?
- What should you think about alcohol?
- How should you think about dating and sex as a Christian?
- How do you wisely navigate social media and protect your digital footprint?

Here's my disclaimer: I don't have all the answers. College in some ways will be experienced differently depending on the university you choose to attend, yet there are universal experiences and situations *all* collegians face. Although I don't have all the answers, by God's grace and His Word, together with the wisdom of mentors, friends, and some helpful books, I feel like I was able to do college right. I have no major regrets, and that had a lot to do with the people who walked, laughed, and prayed with me through those years.

So as a fellow traveler who just happens to be a few years further down the road than you are, the pages that follow will attempt to offer you some of the timeless principles and wisdom I picked up along the way . . . as well as some things I would have done a little differently if I had known then what I know now. As we explore these important issues together, I look forward to sharing some of my story with you. Even though it was not all good times, I had a blast in college.

I have tried to keep the chapters short and sweet since this won't be the only thing you will be reading this semester. Some of what we cover will challenge you, and that's a good thing. Be sure to check out the appendixes in the back of the book and the suggestions for further discovery at the end of each chapter. They might contain just what you need on a bad day or in a particularly challenging situation. In addition to those, there will always be resources available at my website, [JonathanMorrow.org](http://JonathanMorrow.org). And finally, I hope to challenge you as a follower of Jesus Christ to consider what your college experience would look like if it were spent in a distinctly Christian manner (Luke 10:27).

So if you haven't packed yet, that's OK—there's still some time. Thanks for inviting me along for the ride. My prayer is that you have the best college experience possible and that your relationship with Jesus Christ thrives like never before. *Welcome to college!*





## Preparing for Campus Life

*It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. . . .  
You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet,  
there is no knowing where you may be swept off to.*

—J. R. R. TOLKIEN<sup>1</sup>

*Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten  
everything he learned in school.*

—ALBERT EINSTEIN<sup>2</sup>

*I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.*

—MARK TWAIN<sup>3</sup>

THERE I WAS, STANDING IN THE PARKING LOT LOOKING UP AT MY DORM. I had finally arrived . . . at college that is. And after filling out a pile of paperwork, I was the proud owner of a key that would cost me \$15 to replace if lost—but it was to my *own* room. I walked in and was greeted by the sweet smell of industrial-strength disinfectant, cinderblock walls painted pale blue, a metallic bunk bed, and a yellowing bathroom that four sets of roommates would share. Along with my roommate, Dave, this was home my first year of college.

My first week of school was kind of a blur. Everything was new and I was nervous! Not only did I have to find out where to eat (and quickly learn what not to eat), I had to find my mailbox and sign up for a parking sticker. (My conspiracy theory is that universities fund their budgets by the revenue from all of the parking fines they make students pay—so be careful where and in which direction you park.)

Every kind of club and organization imaginable had tables set up all over

campus. There were banners, fliers, welcome parties, and lots of free food. There were signs for rush week (for fraternities and sororities) and progressive dinners at local churches and ministries. It was a buffet of activity.

Within a couple of weeks, Dave and I had met a great group of Christian friends; we all ended up walking through college together. Within another couple of weeks, I had pledged and “de-pledged” a fraternity. God had other plans in that area that would unfold in my junior year.

Looking back now, I clearly see God’s providence at work from the first day. An example: I was helping a friend from my home church in Knoxville move into an apartment. This divine appointment changed my life. In the course of unloading a moving truck with some other people, I met Rich—a guy who just happened to be the newly appointed campus director of Campus Crusade for Christ (now called Cru) at my school. We hit it off right away, and he invited me to a cookout at his house the following night. Several of us went, and the rest is history.

From that small group of students and staff we launched Cru on our campus. Rich became a mentor to me throughout college and one of my best friends. He taught me how to study God’s Word for myself; we studied 2 Timothy and it is still my favorite book of the Bible. God used Cru more than anything else in college to shape my life and provide me with opportunities to serve, lead, and grow. It was through this experience that I discovered I wanted to spend my life investing in the lives of others (2 Tim. 2:2). And my training in Cru inspired me to pledge a fraternity my junior year and be a part of launching a ministry to fraternities and sororities. This by itself was incredibly rewarding, but it was also through this Greek ministry that I met my future wife.

I could go on. But my main point is this: you may think and feel at times that college is a random series of classes, events, and relationships. You may not even be at the college you wanted to attend. Regardless of the situation, I assure you that God is at work. If you yield to His will, you can be confident that He will lead you in the way you should go. Remember, He has good plans for you (Eph. 2:10).

### **Three Pieces of Wisdom**

There are many important lessons to learn during college, but I think these three will be especially helpful in the beginning.

1. *You are not alone.* It will be tempting to think that you are the only one who has ever felt “this way” or struggled with a particular fear or insecurity in college. Not true! College can be lonely and overwhelming at times, but this is the reason that life is a team sport: we need each other. Good friends are essential in college. Moreover, as a son or daughter of God, you have the sure promise that your heavenly Father will never leave or forsake you (Matt. 28:20). Hang in there and stay faithful by leaning on God and the solid friends in your life.
2. *With freedom comes responsibility.* College is great! Finally you are not under the all-seeing eyes of parents. There are no curfews, and no one will make you do your homework or eat your vegetables. You don’t even have to scrub the toilet or wash dishes if you don’t want to (though I’d advise against this particular expression of liberty). What will you do with this newfound freedom? Will you define freedom as living any way you want, or will you define it as the opportunity to live how you ought to live? College is not like golf; there are no mulligans. Your free choices have real consequences. If you don’t study or go to class, you’ll fail. If you don’t take care of your body, you will be sick much of the time. If you break the law, you will have to deal with the consequences. So enjoy your newfound freedom—I sure did—but be responsible in your decisions. What you sow now, you reap later.
3. *Don’t take yourself too seriously.* Take college seriously, but don’t take yourself too seriously. Like everyone else, you will have your moments of wanting to go crawl under a rock and hide out of embarrassment and awkwardness. Many situations will feel like they are the end of the world; they aren’t. You are going to have some bad days. It’s kind of like a rite of passage. If you can’t laugh in the moment, you will definitely laugh later!

## Two Survival Tips

Here are two other survival tips—free of charge. First, pick your roommates carefully. I was blessed with great roommates in college. They were Christians who encouraged me and held me accountable. We hung out together all the time and laughed *a lot*. I wouldn’t have made it without them. Sure, we got on each other’s nerves at times, but that’s par for the course when you

spend that much time with the same people. If you can help it, make sure you are in a good roommate situation; you want an encouraging and safe place to come home to at the end of the day.

Second, find your academic advisor and the financial aid office ASAP. This is critical. You want to graduate someday, right? Well, to ensure that, make certain you are taking the right classes in the right order. There are few worse feelings than heading into your last semester and finding out you still have twenty-four credits left to take! Also, make sure that your advisor is knowledgeable in your program's course requirements. I have heard numerous stories of advisors who didn't have a clue about the academic programs—they were assigned the job of advising because they lacked seniority within the department. If they look uncertain, seek out a second opinion!

As far as financial aid, you'll figure out soon enough how expensive college is. You might qualify for some financial aid. So find the financial aid office early and turn in your paperwork *on time*. I have known several people who lost out on thousands of dollars in financial aid because they forgot to turn in a form by the deadline.

## Owning Your Faith

Now that you have successfully survived high school, it's time to embark on the challenging process of owning your faith in college. Up until now, your parents and youth pastor have probably played a significant role in shaping your Christian convictions—and this is a good thing. But your dad, mom, and youth pastor aren't here to tell you what to believe anymore. You will have to discover what you really believe. There will be growing pains, frustrating days, and some disillusionment along the way. This is a natural part of transitioning from a teenager to a responsible adult. There will be many voices offering their opinions.<sup>4</sup> You will have to decide which ones to listen to and why.

While we will spend plenty of time dealing with “practical college stuff,” we also need to invest some time and effort in becoming grounded in what is true about you, God, the world in which you live, and the really big questions in life. Take it from one who has been where you are, this is time well spent.

Part of owning your faith in college means putting down roots and becoming established in your faith (Col. 2:6–7). God's Word calls us all

to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). This means not only understanding what you believe and why you believe it but also growing in your ability and confidence to talk about it with others (1 Peter 3:15).

### THE BIG IDEAS

- No matter how it looks at the moment, God is providentially at work in the everyday details of your college experience.
- Three important pieces of wisdom to remember are (1) you are not alone, (2) with freedom comes responsibility, and (3) don’t take yourself too seriously.
- Two survival tips are (1) pick your roommates carefully and (2) find your academic advisor and the financial aid office ASAP.
- Owning your Christian faith is a necessary part of growing up and living well.

### For Further Discovery

Fant, Gene C., Jr. *The Liberal Arts: A Student’s Guide*. Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Kullberg, Kelly Monroe. *Finding God Beyond Harvard: The Quest for Veritas*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

JonathanMorrow.org. My personal website with videos, podcast, blog, and other helpful resources.

WelcomeToCollege.tv. *Welcome to College* online resources.