Making College Count

College for the Glory of God

By Ricky Bailey

"Making College Count will challenge you to live intentionally for the glory of God during this once in a lifetime opportunity to grow and make an impact. Grab a few friends, read it slowly and make plans to apply it to your life!"

> *— **Paul Worcester**, National Collegiate Director, North American Mission Board; Author, The Fuel and The Flame: Igniting Your Life and Your Campus for Jesus Christ*

"Making College Count will both instruct and encourage the Christ follower who sees the university campus as a mission field to make disciples and impact fellow students for eternity. Ricky gets it — life is all about the King and advancing His Kingdom. This book will help you do just that."

> *— **David Nelms**, Founder, The Timothy Initiative*

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First Edition, 2026

To every student who has passed through the ministries I've been part of, and to those still to come. You have changed me. I love you all.

Introduction

College for the Glory of God

Why did you decide to go to college?

There are many reasons to go to college. Many go to college because it is simply the normal thing to do. High school graduations no longer seem filled with the same elation as in previous generations. Now, high school graduation is often likened to middle school or elementary school graduations – just one more step to the next level. Whereas in times past, high school prepared students for life in the real world, now it seems mostly to only prepare teenagers for college.

I actually remember arguing with my high school math teacher once about whether going to college determined whether you were successful or not. She was adamant that success came from a college degree. Coming from a family with only one associate's degree, I was adamant that she was wrong. However, I could not ignore that going to college certainly puts a student in a better position for success than not going.

It is often even expected by most teachers and parents that you will go to college. I don't mean to ignore any schools that are struggling just to graduate seniors from high school, but by and large, college is the desired outcome for every student. From kindergarten on, most teachers and parents say things like, "When you go to college," rather than "if." So maybe that's why you chose to go. It is just the normal thing to do. After all, seven out of ten high school students enroll in college now.

Other reasons may include the following:

- College provides you with the training you must have to acquire the desired job.

- College gives you a chance to get away from home for a season – maybe permanently
- College is an escape from something at home
- College is where you can continue to play sports
- College is the only option your parents gave you post-high school
- College is a place to experience freedom without total independence
- College is a place to experiment
- College is a place to date or hook up
- College is a place to party

Don't get me wrong; I am not advocating that any of these reasons are good or bad, but only suggesting that one of these reasons is most likely why you chose or are choosing to endure four years or more of school when most wish they were done after the first twelve years. Though some of the reasons above seem perfectly legitimate, I will argue in this book that any reason that does not rest upon the glory of God is incorrect – even sinful.

If you are a Christian, perhaps you realize that we should design all we do to bring glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31), and if that is true according to the Bible, we can only assume that college then, too, is to be done for the glory of God. We have to look no further than Jesus to see this idea demonstrated for us in real life.

Jesus and the Glory of God

In the life of Jesus, he consistently demonstrated what it meant to do all for the glory of God. In one of his most famous prayers, Jesus declared, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. [. . .] I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the

work that you gave me to do" (John 17:1b-4). Even in a moment when Jesus asks to be glorified, he asks it only because it would glorify the Father. Jesus spent his entire life seizing every moment to bring glory to God.

John 11 tells the story of Jesus' friend Lazarus. Lazarus became gravely ill, and word got to Jesus to come and heal him. Yet, Jesus did not make it in time. When Lazarus died, the text is clear that Jesus could have made it to Lazarus in time to heal him. Instead, he delays his coming for two days intentionally; however, the very moment Jesus learns of Lazarus' illness, he makes this statement, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God" (John 11:4). Jesus knew that he was going to do the impossible and raise Lazarus from the dead in just a few days. Yet, Jesus did not do this miracle for self-praise; he did it so others would glorify God. He even tells those around him that if they had believed in Him, they would have seen the glory of God. He lived his life in such a way that anyone who knew him experienced the glory of God.

Is this true about your life? Now that you are preparing to go to college, or maybe you are almost out of college, can those around you say that they have experienced God's glory just by being around you? Jesus did everything for the glory of God, and according to John, if we say that Christ abides in us, then we are to walk even as he walked (1 John 2:6). Therefore, we are to do everything for the glory of God.

When walking to class, we should be asking how we can glorify God during class. We should ask how we can glorify God in all our relationships. We should ask how we can glorify God during our lunch breaks. EVERYTHING. We should ask how we can glorify God in everything! Jesus gave us the model; we only have the task of following it.

All for the Glory of God

Typically, when I speak like this to college students, everyone gets excited – and then they leave, forgetting everything I said minutes later. I was initially frustrated by what could only seem to be apathy and lethargy on the part of my students. I was sure it had nothing to do with me.

One day I was pondering this phenomenon, and I began to ask God why students weren't taking this challenge seriously when they seemed to respond so well to the idea of "college for the glory of God." That's when it hit me. To most, this is just an ideal. It is not something that has a practical effect. I had delivered stirring words and roused the students' spirits, but I had failed to explain what college for the glory of God looks like or even to explain that this is an achievable pursuit.

In a way, this book is really an answer to the question, "What does it mean to live for the glory of God in college?" I hope that by reading this, you don't simply put the book down inspired, but that you put the book down with a clear plan on how you will bring this to fruition during your collegiate career. As we will discuss in depth throughout the book, there is no area in your life where God does not deserve to receive glory. Therefore, your task as a Christian is to learn how to cultivate each sphere of your life in a way that brings God maximum glory. There is no distinction between the secular and the sacred – you are the sacred! And everything you do should reflect the God who dwells within you in a way that brings ultimate glory to him.

Here is another way, perhaps more practical, of looking at bringing God optimum glory in your life. Think of it as doing all in the name of God so that his name will be known. A way for God to receive glory in your life is when you do so many things in his name that others know who your God is. At our university, we consistently pray that our campus will become one that honors God, and that even those who refuse to believe will revere and

honor his name because they cannot deny the works they see him do.

Psalm 115:1 has been a sort of mantra to champion this cause, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, / for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!" One of the ways that we have tried to align our hearts and minds with this truth is when we gather to pray before a small group or a gathering, instead of asking God to bless this time or asking for prayer requests, we simply ask "How do you want to see God glorified tonight?" or, "God, what do you want tonight to be?" This practice has changed how we think about the times we gather with believers and nonbelievers as it has forced us to think of ways that God could be glorified, pray for them to materialize, and participate in it. God has never failed to come through on at least one of these prayer requests. God will answer prayer that seeks to bring him glory.

Bringing it Home

I hope that in this book, you begin to understand that there is no place in your collegiate career where God does not deserve to receive glory. Though sort of strange, I remember being in college and talking about 1 Corinthians 10:31 with my friend Josh. The verse says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." We were brushing our teeth, and I remember asking him with toothpaste foam dripping from my mouth, "How the heck do we bring glory to God when brushing our teeth?" He responded, "You know, I've thought about that when using the bathroom. How are we to glorify God when we use the bathroom?" These may seem like silly questions, but they reveal a heartfelt desire to please God in all things.

My goal in this book is to provide a complete answer for college students asking how to bring glory to God during what I

consider the greatest mission trip you will ever take. Think about it, you get to minister to an interested, multiethnic, culturally and intellectually diverse group of young people for four or more years – and you get a degree out of it, too. There is nothing like it!

I pray that college will be some of the best years of your life, not because of the parties or the freedom, but because God molded you into a mature believer who learned in college how to glorify God in all things.