

What does student life involve?

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[0:00] We would look in these next few weeks about various issues of starting as a student. So I thought we could have a little think about this together for a minute or two.

I think I have to move up here because I can't my arm isn't long enough to write without doing that. So have you got any thoughts about what sort of things change when people start as a student? I know not everybody in this room has had that experience or would dream of having that experience, but I think you might be able to think about it, imagine it. Starting as a student. So what sort of things are involved with that? Any suggestions please?

Leaving home. So a change of home, leaving home. Would anybody like, can we, what's the word I'm looking for? Tease that out, spell that out, draw that out.

So if you leave home, what sort of things are involved in leaving home? Independence, thank you. Independence. Is that right?

[1:16] Yeah, I can never spell when I'm in front of people. I can't spell when I'm not in front of people actually. So let's spell that out a little bit further. Independence in what sort of way?

Any particular sort of ways? Yeah, no parental care. Okay, independent of parental care.

Do you think that's a total separation from parental care? No. I think parents always worry about their children no matter how old they are.

I expect my dad worries about me. So, and it isn't, I think probably, it's possible that mum and dad might be providing banking facilities as well.

So it isn't a total independence. They might or they might not. So, can we take this on a bit further? So, parental care. Anything else that changes when people become students?

[2:16] Yes, food. So, that's actually quite a big change. Well, I think it's a big change when I became a student.

So, food. So the fact that you might have to do cooking, if, well you might have to do cooking. So I learnt to cook the two things that I can still cook, which is one vegetable curry and two, I can't remember what the second one is, so I can probably only cook one thing.

So, learning how to cook. Yeah, anything else? Tim became a sous chef as a result of his cooking. Would you say that was true? That you branched out in your cooking? Okay. Right. Anything else?

So, we're affecting home, we're affecting parental care, we're affecting food. Anything else?

Budget. Budget. Adjusting to a revised budget. Budget. So, that's money and finance.

[3:25] Can we spell that out a bit? So, in what way might there be a change? Yeah, you have to manage your own money. Yeah, you have to manage your own money.

Managing money means, managing money means, not spending more money than you actually have got.

I think that's what it means, isn't it? It took me in a student context. So, pardon? How many students in the history of the academic year have ever achieved that? Not spending more money.

Well, that's an interesting thought. It's changed. When I was a student, the government gave us money. And I did actually end up with some left over at the end.

But now, it's a question of managing debt, isn't it? I think this is a very unhelpful thing for the government to do, really. To start people off in a way of being in debt.

[4:31] So, I'm going to put managing debt. So, money. Managing money. Managing debt. Anything else that changes?

Get a lot of new friends and leaves them with me. Thank you. So, socially. So, there's a question of friends. So, you lose some friends.

And you leave some friends. So, I don't know. I look back at the school friends that I had when I was at school. And some of them that I got on with very well, I don't think I ever saw again.

And I've... Some I've kept up with. Some I have located on Facebook. But some friends I just have lost.

Is that...? Yeah. And you gain friends, don't you? Well, you might do.

[5 : 32] Because I've stayed in the same place where I went to university, many of the friends I gained, many of the friends I've gained, or at least some of the friends I've gained, I've kept. So, it's been a time of gaining friends.

So, there's a change. What have we got? As regards home. As regards parental care. As regards food. As regards money. Socially. Yep.

Any other changes? Sorry, that's Steve. Yep. There is an intellectual change because you're much more responsible for your life than you are in the sixth form of college.

Yes, thank you very much. An intellectual change to do with your mind, to do with learning. And previously, education was something...

Well, arguably. Previously, education was something that other people did to you. But from university onwards, it's something that you do with the input of other people.

[6 : 35] Is that about right? Am I expressing that correctly? So, you're an active participant in it. And if you don't do anything, they don't do it to you for you. Yep. So, there's a responsibility.

Responsibility. Yep. So, I'm glad somebody mentioned something about study in the list because it was about being a student.

Anything else? Geographically. Sorry? Geographically. Geographically. Yes. There's a geographical change. Thank you for that, Wes. That's right. There's a geographical change.

So, you get to know a new place. I have to say, when I started as student, because I lived out on the campus, I got to know the campus fairly well.

But Brighton was a bit of a mystery because of the huge barrier between Falmer and Brighton, which is four miles. And you had to get on a train. And you had to get on a bus.

[7 : 38] And sometimes, I never crossed that hurdle. Which is bizarre, really, isn't it? And I never knew very much about Sussex until, I think, until I got married.

I never bothered to go outside Brighton. I think some students never even knew what Falmer was. There's a little village with a pond and a lovely little church and some walks.

So, there's a geographical change. Yep. Anything else? Time. Thank you. Yeah. Now, there speaks Mark with a heart full of thoughts about time management.

Yeah. Because people don't tell you. Well, I suppose if you do science and maths and things like that, you tend to get lectures fairly well throughout the week. But if you do something like English, they just throw a book at you and say, come back next year and tell us whether you've read it.

Is that right? That's a bit of an exaggeration, isn't it? But you do have to learn how to use time. And in particular, I think sleep and bedtime and waking up time, that's a real challenge, I think.

[9 : 00] Because it's sort of natural to get later and later and later. So, one of our good friends was actually very successful in his academic career. Became a professor.

He, by the time he'd finished his undergraduate career, was completely nocturnal. He didn't go to any of the lectures. He slept all day and he worked all night. And he seemed to manage very well. I don't know how he ever got to any lectures. But, so, time management, sleep, things like that. How are we doing? Any other things there? I can think of one other thing at least that we haven't looked at Brenda.

Decision making. Decision making. Decision making. Well, I don't know. Can't make up my mind about that. Yeah, decision making.

That's right. There are decisions that have to be made. And I think one needs to learn how to make decisions. And that's not always an easy thing to do.

[10 : 14] Decision making. Thank you, Brenda. Where's? Currency. For overseas students. Thank you. Okay. So, there's lots of things for overseas students. Currency. So, if you're an international student, and you don't have to be hugely international to get puzzled by all sorts of things in the UK.

So, currency. The fact that some of the little coins are worth a lot and some of the big coins are worth next to nothing. That's very surprising. Yes, it's great.

I'm thinking about sometimes when you go to a supermarket, you tend to, well, try to adjust the local currency.

So, you have to work out sort of an exchange rate. So, you're looking at something and saying, is that expensive? What's that in dollars? Or, what's that in Swiss francs or something like that? Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah, that's right. So, if we were to think in international terms, things, there's all sorts of what is normal.

[11:22] So, our friends who came from the state some years ago, Brian and Jordan, they came to Park Village. And, now what was it they got stuck on with bedding? They couldn't work out how to, I think they were supplied with a duvet and a duvet cover.

And they weren't sure whether they were supposed to get inside the duvet cover, put the duvet over them, or whether they were to put the mattress inside the duvet cover, or what. And they got in a right pickle about that.

And, they also couldn't work out how to eat Weetabix. Do you know Weetabix? So, they weren't sure whether you spread jam on it, or whether you crumble it into something, or whether you just eat it like it is.

Just in case you're not too sure, I think the best way is to put milk on it and perhaps sugar. But, they struggled with things like that. So, there's all sorts of issues about coming into a new culture.

Language. Language. Yeah, thank you. I'm running out of space here. Language. So, for an international student, that's going to be quite a hurdle.

[12:33] Our nephew from the Seychelles came, how many years ago did he come? Two or three, three or four years ago. Stayed out at Park Village.

And I think it, just the whole experience was too much for him. And he gave up and went home, didn't he, after about three or four weeks. So, language would be part of it.

Flu. Flu. Yes, thank you. Health. Getting flu. Getting a cold, looking after yourself, or if nobody's there to pamper you, how do you manage?

I was thinking, any other thoughts? If you come from a sort of Christian background, you get covered with people believing in the ideas of how the world was created and things like that. You can sometimes either be strengthening your faith or you can probably lose your faith by being corrupted by the pagan ideas. Yes, it is as a Christian worldview. Thank you.

[13:43] Challenging the world. Yeah, that's right. So, if you come as a student with a Christian background or a Christian stance in your younger day, in your teenage years, then this gets challenged.

How will you stand up? Yeah, that's right. Thank you very much. There's one thing that I was going to say, we'll come look at that in fact in a moment.

I was going to say leisure, but I realised I can't spell leisure. So, somebody have to help me. How do you spell leisure? Leisure. Yeah, leisure.

And under that heading, there's all sorts of possibilities, aren't there, of things that have not to do with study or just surviving, but this is the whole, you know, you've got freedom to enjoy pleasures and activities in all sorts of ways that you might not have had before.

And so, we've got all the things about alcohol and all the other temptations that youth culture can offer.

[15:03] That's quite a list, isn't it, of things that somebody coming to Brighton as a student would have to be thinking about. It's quite a lot. It's a lot.

It's a lot. Thank you. Yes. So, if we put that under the socially bit, loneliness. It's not automatic that people make friends.

There is a window of opportunity, it seems to me, when everybody is looking for friends in the early stages of being a student.

But, not everybody is good at using those opportunities. And there is the opportunity for people to be quite lonely. Ring up mum or dad and say, don't like it here, can I come home?

So, loneliness, thank you for that Enid, yeah. Okay, well we're going to come and look in a moment at what the Bible says.

[16:01] Would anybody like to choose another song? So, let's see if I can shuffle around to just make this a little bit more workable.

So, we looked at those various things that change.

And let's see if we can hear what God has to say to us about this. Let's pray. Lord in heaven, we pray to you that you will show us from your word how we are to live.

And how people are to face the challenges in their lives, not least the challenge of becoming a student. So, help us in this we ask in Jesus name.

Amen. Now, let's look at what God and Jesus and the Bible say. So, there isn't a classic chapter which says, if you're a student, this is, you know, the chapter for you.

[17 : 35] But there are, I think, a number of important principles that affect all of us. And that includes students, it might be a particular relevance for students. So, here's the first one.

That nothing is outside God's control. I think that's a very important principle. Nothing is outside God's control.

So, the course of study that someone might do is not outside God's control.

The place where they do their study is not outside God's control. The people that you end up meeting in the corridor is not outside God's control.

Etc. Let's look at some Bible texts. So, let's look at Acts 17, verses 26 to 28.

[18 : 33] Mark, could you read Acts 17, verses 26 to 28, please?

For one man, you make every nation admit that they should have a whole earth, and he determined the exact time set for them, and the exact places that they should live.

God did this so that the men could seek him, and perhaps reach out to him, and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. When he is in the end, we live and live and live and have our being, as some of your own poets have said, we are his offspring.

Thank you very much. So, this quotation from a speech by Paul mentions a particular thing that is under God's control. Anybody like to spot what particular thing is mentioned in the verse there that is under God's control?

Your domicile. Your domicile, yes, which means where you live. Which is a fascinating thing to say, isn't it? He determined the time set for them, he is talking about every nation, and the exact places where they should live.

[19 : 56] I think we can include in that the individual members of nations. There is something that God determines about where people live.

It's quite something, isn't it? And what is the purpose?

So, let's stop and just think about that. He determines the exact places where people live. It is not just a random accident if you have moved from one country to another country.

There is something in it under God's control. It is not just a random accident if you've moved from one location to another location. There is something under God's control about it.

It's not even an accident if you've moved from one house to another house. There is something about God's control over that. And the text also says why.

[20 : 56] Anybody spot the motivation behind it? Why did God determine times and places? That's what it says.

God did this so that men would seek him. And did he intend that to be a pointless exercise? What does it say?

And find him. There is something purposeful about it. He moves people from one place to another. With this in view that people would seek God and perhaps reach out for him and find him.

So I think that's an encouraging thing as a number of people will have moved from one place to another. Or from one country to another to come to Brighton. God has a purpose in that. That people would seek him and find him.

And does it say that that is a very difficult thing for people to do? Correct. Verse 27 says he's not far away.

[22 : 05] I think that's a very comforting thought, isn't it? It isn't as though God is making it hugely difficult. Like I ordered something on Amazon.

No, it wasn't on Amazon. I ordered something the other day. And when it came, the post office had put an import duty on it, tax on it, plus VAT, plus a penalty charge.

And it was all down to the fact that on the packing envelope, they had put the wrong amount of currency on it. So I had to send in a complaint form to Swansea with the original wrapping, with the original invoice, and proof that I'd paid it.

And I had to send it, and then I had to ring up, and then I had to wait. And it took three months before I got my 12 pounds back. But they made it really difficult.

But it's saying here that God doesn't make it difficult. He's not far from each one of us. It's interesting, isn't it? So there's a statement about God controlling, in particular, the place where we go.

[23 : 25] Go. Let's look at Luke 12, 4-7. Luke 12.

This is not in the context of being a student. It's in the context of, possibly, of opposition to Christians and of persecution. Luke 12, 4-7.

Please, could you read us those verses? I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body. And after that, you do no more. But I will show you who you should fear. Fear him who, after killing the body, has power to throw you into hell.

Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows, sold, or two pennants? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid.

You will work more than many sparrows. Well, that's interesting, isn't it? Because half the verses tell you to be afraid, and then the other half tell you not to be afraid. I suppose it's a question of fearing the right things.

[24 : 31] Fearing here, he says, don't fear opposition and persecution. Don't fear that God's going to let you go.

What he does say is fear God. Fear him who has the power to throw you into hell. Fear him. He's saying be serious. I think that's the way to understand it. Be serious about God.

Is there anything in those verses that says that nothing is outside God's control?

There's nothing in those verses that says... Is there anything in the verses that says nothing is outside God's control? Is there anything in the verses that says that?

It's a solid, yeah. It's a solid, yeah. Because God knows how many hairs on your head. Yeah. It must have been comprehensive. And not have things like that. Thank you.

[25 : 33] Yes. So it mentions hairs on your head. They're all numbered. I think it's implying that God has a knowledge of and even a degree of care for your hair.

He knows. I'm just looking around now trying to make sure I light my eyes on the right sort of person. He knows about the hairs on our head. So I think that says something about his knowledge and his will.

What about this about the sparrows? So I think that's saying that nothing is outside God's control in the sense of his care for people.

It isn't a promise for everybody. It's a promise to these people who are following the Lord and therefore in danger of being persecuted.

So it is aimed in a certain direction about the way his care operates. Verses 22 to 26.

[26 : 42] Oh no, I've got 22 to 34. 22 to 34. Again, this is for his disciples. But it does say something about his control, I believe, and his care.

Martin, could you read us Luke 12, 22 to 34 please? And Jesus said to his disciples, Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.

Life is more than food, the body more than purpose. Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn. God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are from birds.

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. But then is how God clothes the grass and the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire.

[27 : 52] How much more would he clothe you? O your little faith. And do not set your heart on what you see or dream. Do not worry about it, for the pagan world runs after all such things.

And your father knows that you need them. And seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid of the flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out.

The treasure in heaven will not be exhausted. When no thief comes near and no world destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Thank you very much. So it's not aimed at absolutely everybody. It's aimed at people with a particular approach to life, his disciples.

But is there anything in those verses that gives an assurance that, if you like, nothing is outside God's control. Or putting it the other way, that God is controlling things for his people.

[28 : 59] Any of the verses that suggest that or say that? Yeah, carry on. Yeah.

Okay, he provides for the birds. Which verse were you on, Mark?

24. 24. Consider the ravens. Yeah. God feeds them. And then the application. How does it, is there an application? You don't have to worry because you can't have a single hour to your life.

Yep. Thank you. You can't, but if you, by worrying you get it, you get no further. So there's no point in worrying. Yep. Anything else in there that speaks about God's care and provision and control? He knows what we need. Thank you. Thank you. Verse 30. The Father knows what you need. He knows you need these things.

[30 : 06] So I think, well, there's quite a few verses like that. I haven't, we won't go through all of them, but I'll just put a few there. I think it does say that when Christians are concerned about where they're going to go, how they're going to survive, whether they're in God's hand, and the Bible says a lot about you are in God's hand.

He does move people to different places. He does have a purpose in it, has a purpose for people who are not yet Christians, that they should seek him. And he has a protection and a providing for people who are his people.

So I think that's true whether you're a student or not, but I think it's particularly helpful for somebody who perhaps this evening has moved into a place and it looks different, smells different.

They don't know where their next cup of coffee is coming from, etc. So perhaps there's something helpful there. Number two. Learning, growing, developing is an essential part of the human project in this world.

So let me explain what I mean by that. I put in this world because I think there are things that God uses in this world that he won't necessarily use in the next world. For example, in this world there's giving in marriage and in the world to come it won't be like that, so that would be different.

[31 : 37] In this world, God has this project called humanity. And the idea of people being human is apparently extraordinarily precious to God.

That he has made humankind in his own image. And that involves all sorts of things. It involves creativity. It involves society.

It involves interacting with creation. It involves making things and speaking and so on and so on, which I won't go into. But one of the things this involves is learning.

What have I put? Learning and growing and developing. So God doesn't take pleasure in the idea that if you have babies, you keep them as babies.

Just keep them like they are. They're adorable, even though they keep you up all night. And much as, in a way, you keep the photos of your children and say, oh, weren't they nice?

[32 : 46] Weren't they lovely when they were three or four? And so on. But God doesn't want them to stay three and four. He wants them to become five and six and then six and seven and seven and eight and on through.

And I've got a couple of verses that I think would simply point that out from Luke's Gospel. And these verses describe what happened to the greatest human of all.

And if it happened to him, then it can't be such a bad thing if it happens to us. So this is Luke 1 verse 80. That's referring not to Jesus, but to John the Baptist.

And then Luke 2, 51 and 52. So if you found Luke's Gospel. Let's start at this end now.

Maria, could you read us Luke 1 verse 80, please? This is about John the Baptist. John grew and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the desert before he appeared to Israel.

[34 : 02] Yes, this is John the Baptist. And he grew and became strong in spirit. So for John the Baptist, it wasn't that he stepped into the world fully grown, didn't need to learn anything, didn't need to develop.

God's way for John the Baptist was that he grew and became strong. He went through a learning and developing process. So you might say, well, that's just John the Baptist.

You might say that that's not God's ideal way, but I think it is. Luke 2, perhaps Maria could read these now. This is about Mary and Joseph and their son Jesus.

Luke 2, 51 and 52. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and structure and in favour with God and men. Thank you. I think that is an actual blueprint of what pleases God about humankind in this world.

[35 : 12] So Jesus entered the world. He doesn't come fully formed like Venus stepping out of the waves at Paphos. He comes as a baby and he grows, notice, in wisdom.

So there's an intellectual development. And stature. So there's a physical development. And in favour with God and men.

So there's a social development and a spiritual development. And it is part, an essential part of the human project. So you might say, is it a spiritual thing to go to university even?

Wouldn't it be better if I did door-to-door evangelism or something like that? Well, maybe God calls people to that. But the idea of learning, spending time learning and developing is not an unspiritual thing.

It's part of God's plan for humankind. It's a good thing to do that. Does that make sense? Yes. So, again, you might face the question, is it worth studying?

[36 : 31] Is it worth doing a degree? Is it a good thing to do? Or should I just go out and earn money? And you might just go out and earn money. But it's not a wrong thing to spend time learning if there is the opportunity to do that.

It's not a wrong thing to do. And the third thing, of my third of three points. Passing on wisdom to the next generation is part of the human project.

Passing on wisdom to the next generation is part of the human project. I've got here Proverbs chapter 4. So if you aim for the middle of the Bible and then go a little bit more towards, well, a little bit further on, you get to Proverbs.

Psalms are in the middle. A little bit further on is Proverbs. And it represents, the book of Proverbs represents a huge chunk of biblical thinking under the heading, Wisdom.

And I'm referencing the whole of chapter 4, but I don't think we have to read all of it because you get the idea of it fairly quickly.

[37 : 41] What it's saying is there is a right passing on of wisdom from one generation to another.

It's an important thing to do. It's an important thing to do. And in Proverbs, you can't get away from the fact that it is not just facts and figures. And wisdom is not just how to think or how to think on a purely human level.

In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is how to think in relation to God. How to put all the facts and figures into relation with God.

So in that sense, the University of Sussex, whose motto is be still and know, is missing out a huge chunk of what's important.

In fact, it's a quotation from the Bible, be still and know. The full quotation says, be still and know that I am God. And that was actually the motto that was over the over County Hall and the Isle of Wight in Newport.

[38 : 49] Be still and know that I am God. That's a good motto to have. The University of Sussex has part of it. Let's look at Proverbs chapter 4. Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction.

Pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning. So do not forsake my teaching. When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, lay hold of my words with all your heart.

Keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom. Get understanding. Do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom.

She will protect you. Love her. She will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme. Therefore, get wisdom. Though it costs you all you have, get understanding.

Esteem her and she will exalt you. Embrace her and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor. Listen, my son, accept what I say and the years of your life will be many.

[40 : 04] I will guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered. When you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction.

Do not let it go. Guard it well, for it is your life. Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it.

Do not travel on it. Turn from it and go your own way. For they cannot sleep till they do evil. They are robbed of slumber till they make someone full. They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness.

They do not know what makes them stumble. My son, pay attention to what I say. Listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight.

[41 : 05] Keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them. And health to a man's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart. For it is the wellspring of life. Put away

perversity from your mouth.

Keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead. Fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet. Take only ways that are firm.

Do not swerve to the right or to the left. Keep your foot from evil. That's the whole chapter. You see the point of it? He's saying that there is a rightness about passing on wisdom to the next generation. He's quite urgent about it. But his wisdom is not just facts and figures. It's in a moral and spiritual context.

He says the wisdom I want you to have. He's not just knowing the kings of England in order of merit or something. But how to live. How to live in God's world.

[42 : 06] And that's a big challenge, isn't it? He says the ending of any of those. He says the ending of any of those. He says the ending of any of those. He says the ending of any of those. He says the ending of any of those. Observations.

I think those three points are helpful when we're thinking of... Yeah, I think they're helpful for all of us, actually, aren't they?