



PREPARE

7 THINGS TO MAKE LEAVING HOME A LITTLE EASIER

Adulting is hard. From managing those annoying life admin tasks like paying bills, to dealing with big decisions (what to study, who to marry, where to live). Leaving home is likely to be one of the most of the exciting and daunting phases of your life. There are new places to be explored, new freedoms, opportunities and challenges.

Don't let anyone fool you—the decisions you make will have a significant impact on who you become. It's often during this phase of life that we set habits, break routine, and establish ways of thinking and doing things that can last a lifetime.

So, here are 7 things to be thinking about as you make the transition away from home. At the end of each section is an action point, something to do right away as you take steps towards preparing to leave home.

We offer you these things to think about, pray about and build on.

1. DECIDE WHAT YOU REALLY WANT

The first step in preparing to leave home and settle into a new environment is to make a conscious and definite decision about what direction you want your life to take. Many people fail to do this and before they know it their lives have drifted in directions they would never consciously have chosen. Others secretly want to check and see if the grass is greener on the other side, to experience life “out there in the world” and not surprisingly they soon get their wish!

So, do some hard thinking and praying now. Do you really want your Christian life to grow and develop? Do you really want to live according to your own current values and morals? Are you willing to trust God that many things the world has to offer may seem exciting and tempting, but are really not good for you?

Be intentional about where your life is headed. Don't drift.

TAKE ACTION

Write down a description of what you want your life to look like a year from now.

2. TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

You may have spent your school years with plenty of people to support you and guide you: parents, aunts and uncles, older siblings, youth leaders, family, church pastors or leaders...

Leaving home may mean that this support and guidance will be less readily available and you will have to take greater responsibility for your own decisions. Realising this is important. True, moving away from home presents dangers to your life and faith, but on a more positive note, it also provides opportunities to grow and to take on a more adult role in life.

So, now it's time to take responsibility for your own faith and life: for the way you use your time, talents and money; for your relationship with God and your relationships with others. With greater freedom comes greater responsibility.

TAKE ACTION

Set yourself some goals for the year that you will strive toward achieving.



3. MAKE FINDING A CHURCH HOME A PRIORITY

The first few weeks away from home in a new city are critical because you are establishing patterns and habits. It's easy to allow other things to crowd out church attendance so make it a priority to find a church.

For better or worse you will not find a church or youth ministry just like the one you left. Nor will you find the perfect church that does everything the way you want it done. Don't just think about what you can get from a church but look for ways to be involved and to give. Involve God in the decision-making process and allow him to lead you toward your new spiritual home.

In practical terms the process of finding a new church may involve attending a number of them. That's OK, but don't spend too long searching. Many people working in ministry with students and young adults notice the average search time tends to be around 6-8 weeks max.

TAKE ACTION

Describe the sort of church you are hoping to attend; consider understanding of Scripture (how the Bible is taught and applied), style of worship, ministry focus, values of leadership and opportunities to serve.

4. DEVELOP POSITIVE FRIENDSHIPS

We all have the tendency to become like the people we hang out with. Moving away from home to study is a critical time because it often involves making new friendships. As you establish these friendships tread carefully—you are not just choosing people to spend time with. You are choosing people you may become like.

Don't allow any initial feelings of loneliness to cloud your judgment. Sometimes God uses loneliness to get us to press more closely into him. Seek his guidance when it comes to friendship and be prepared to wait. The friendships you previously enjoyed took time to develop and so will these ones. Look for people to be a friend to—don't simply wait for others to make the first move.

TAKE ACTION

Describe the sort of people you want to have as friends when you move.

5. EXPLORE YOUR DOUBTS

A move away from home to study often coincides with a time of life in which we begin to ask deeper questions about our faith. Some of our previous beliefs can begin to seem simplistic as we are confronted with new realities. Some courses introduce us to new information that challenges previously held beliefs.

At the same time as this is happening we find ourselves without the same sense of Christian community that helped us to remain faithful.

Doubts are a normal part of faith development and questions are to be encouraged and not feared. Resolve to search out answers by finding people who will take your questions seriously and assist you in your search for understanding and truth. Many older Christians will have walked through similar seasons of doubt and questioning. Don't be misled by clever arguments or intellectual intimidation. Do not neglect your relationship with God and don't doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light.

TAKE ACTION

*What doubts and questions are you already struggling with?
Talk to a trusted pastor before you leave.*



6. ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY

Even with the best desire in the world, it's a good idea to have people who will help you remain accountable. God intends that we take responsibility for each other's personal growth. Before you leave home, talk with a pastor and with trusted friends and family and give them permission to ask the tough questions of you after you move. Share some of your action points and ask them to pray God would lead you and guide as you adjust to somewhere new.

As you settle on a new church home give similar permission to people you connect with there. Find someone who you can talk with openly and honestly.

Ask all these people to pray for you and, above all, remember you are ultimately accountable to God and that you will one day give account for the decisions you will be making following your move.

TAKE ACTION

Who are the people you currently know and who you will approach to keep you accountable?

7. MAKE A PLAN

The fact you have read this far means you are at least interested in making a healthy transition to student life in a new city—a transition that will see your current conviction and values mature. You have probably looked at the action points and reflected on them briefly before moving on to the next page.

Now it's time to get serious. Develop an action plan. Go back and revisit all the action points and write down exactly what you intend to do. Don't just think it—thoughts are easily lost. Use these action points to develop a clear plan of what you intend to do on arriving in your new surroundings and refer to it regularly. Find people who you can share with and who will keep you accountable.

Don't become another statistic—a Christian young person who lost their faith, not by deliberate choice, but through gradual drift.

TAKE ACTION

Write out a clear and specific plan of action that you will implement after you move.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Murray Brown is a Youth Enabler with CCCNZ. He has over 35 years experience in youth ministry, including serving as a youth pastor, denominational leadership (national and regional) and 12 years lecturing in youth ministry at Carey Baptist College. He has taught widely both in NZ and overseas, and has acted as a youth ministry consultant for churches and has been a supervisor/mentor to many youth pastors.

