

God's Student Handbook

by Bryan Gibson

Most students receive a handbook, outlining the behavior expected of them and the penalties if they don't. Here are some instructions from God's handbook, most of which you won't find in any other handbook. To keep it simple, we'll use *Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* as our source for all of these.

School can be pretty trying at times, so you're going to need God's help. The same power He used to raise Christ from the dead is available to you (1:19-20), but only if you're in Christ. It is only through Him (3:12) that you have access to the "exceeding greatness of His power" (1:19), the same power that is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (3:20). So if you've reached a responsible age, and you're not already a Christian, become one today.

Value your education, but even more so your spiritual education. God's chief concern for you is that you grow spiritually, that you "come to...the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (4:11-15).

No matter how much pressure they may apply, don't do the sinful things that others are doing—Christ is your model, not them (4:17-24). The Lord says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (5:11). Let your light shine—you may be surprised by how many are drawn to it.

Respect your superiors (teachers, administrators, coaches, etc.) and do what they tell you, even when they're not around (6:5-8). They may not watch you all the time, but the Lord does.

Don't lie to anyone—to yourself, to your classmates, or to your superiors (4:25). You want everyone to trust you, and the sure fire way to accomplish that is to be honest with everyone. Keep in mind, too, that there other ways to lie than with your mouth. When you turn in an assignment, you're saying in effect, "this is mine." If it's not, that's a lie.

If you get mad, don't stay mad (4:26), because if you do, you'll give the devil a "foothold" (4:27, NIV), and he won't let go until you say or do something you'll regret. Uncontrolled anger leads to a lot of sins, so work hard to keep it under control.

Don't take anything that doesn't belong to you (4:28), and that includes answers to a test.

Don't use foul language (4:29; 5:4), no matter how cool you and others may think it sounds. The Oxford English Dictionary contains 295,000 words, with over 600,000 different word forms. That gives you a lot of choices, without having to resort to foul language.

Treat others the way you want to be treated. "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (4:31-32). Be especially kind to those students who may not have the blessings or advantages you do.

Resist and overcome the temptation to have sex before marriage. “Walk in love...but fornication...let it not even be named among you” (5:2-3).

Abstain from alcohol. Yes, the passage says, “do not be drunk with wine” (5:18), but just a little alcohol in your system makes it harder to “stand against the wiles of the devil” (6:11). Weaken your resistance just a little bit, and you can be sure that he will move in for the kill. “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (6:13).