



# PREPARE!



## Insights and Advice for Those Leaving Home to Study

by Murray Brown

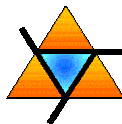
## Links

Christian groups on campus: <http://www.tscf.org.nz/index.php?id=6>

Christian chaplains on campus: <http://www.anztca.net.nz/directory.html#hrg>

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Written as a resource for YouthTRANZ



*YouthTRANZ* is a YouthTRAIN initiative sponsored by the Baptist Youth Hostel (Palm. Nth.)

*"A home away from home for tertiary students."*

[www.byh.co.nz](http://www.byh.co.nz)

[www.youthtrain.com](http://www.youthtrain.com)

## About the author:

Murray Brown is the director of YouthTRAIN, a inter-denominational organisation that trains and equips youth workers. He has been involved in youth ministry for 25 years, ten of which were in Palmerston North in a church with a strong student emphasis.

His experiences there in seeing young people fall away from their Christian commitment while others made the transition effectively has led to the formation of YouthTRANZ—a branch of YouthTRAIN that seeks to connect young people leaving home to study with churches in their new city.



## Develop an action 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 and not be cast aside. 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" because 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 when you do arrive refer to this plan often and be accountable for its implementation.

*Don't just "think it" because thoughts are easily lost.*



Don't become another statistic—a Christian young person who lost their faith and left the church; not by deliberate choice but through gradual drift

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**Action Point:** Take time to write out a clear and specific plan of action that you will implement after you move.

## PREPARE!

Leaving home to study in a new city is one of life's most enriching experiences. It is a time when new places are explored, both geographical and personal. Along with the sights, sounds and experiences of a new city, you will face new freedoms, opportunities and challenges that have the potential to be either the making or breaking of you.

Moving away from home for the first time is a bridge into adulthood. The decisions you make in this important phase of life will have a significant impact on who you are to become. Therefore it is essential that you approach this transition with a good deal of thought and resolve.

This booklet is designed to help you make this transition toward adulthood easier and to assist you in navigating your way through the challenges that lie ahead. In particular it offers seven recommendations born from experience.

If you reflect on its insights and commit yourself to following its advice, rather than waste the foundation that has been established in your life, you will build on it.



## Decide what you really want

The first step in preparing to leave home and settle in to a new environment is to make a conscious and definite decision about what direction you want your life to take. Many 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 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 those things that may seem so exciting and tempting, are really not good for you?

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

*Make a conscious and definite decision about what direction you want your life to take.*



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



## Establish accountability

Even with the best desire in the world, it's a good idea to have people who will help you remain accountable to the action points you have recorded thus far. None of us is an island and 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.

As you settle on a new church home give similar permission to people you connect with there. Find a “buddy” whom you can talk with 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.

*Above all remember you are ultimately accountable to God .*



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**Action Point:** Who are the people you know now you will approach to keep you accountable?



## 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. 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.

*Don't doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light.*



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



## Take personal responsibility

Up until now you've had plenty of people to support you and guide you. In this new phase of life that 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.

*With greater freedom comes greater responsibility.*



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.

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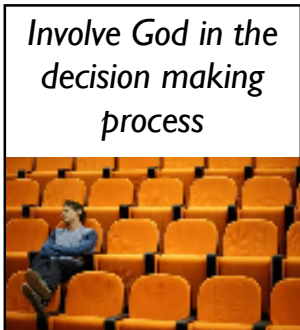
**Action Point:** Set yourself some goals for the year that you will strive toward achieving.



## 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 the whole year looking! Resolve to have made a decision no later than the end of the 1st term. Once you have made your decision, let the pastoral staff know so that they will know to pastorally care for you.

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**Action Point:** Describe the sort of church you sense God will lead you too.



## 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 the making of 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.



Put yourself in situations where you maximise your chances of developing positive friendships.

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**Action Point:** Describe the sort of people you want to have as friends when you move.