

## **Answers to Frequently Asked Question about life after University for international students.**

### **Family.**

#### **F1. My family is not Christian and is not happy that I am a Christian. How do I tell them about Christ?**

Tell your family that you have become a Christian as soon as you can. But choose your timing well. Do not wait for a crisis (like a family funeral ) or an important occasion (a family temple visit) to break the news. Do it when things are calm and where there is the least opportunity for conflict. If conflict does occur it is best if you do not become argumentative. Try to remain calm and not escalate the conflict. If the first time results in a heated argument , be the first to withdraw , be gracious and try again to bring up the matter another time. Keep praying that God will soften their hearts. It may take many years for them to accept it so be patient and don't give up praying.

#### **F2. My family doesn't like the idea that I go to church regularly. They may even stop me from going to church.**

If your family stops you from going to church, there is not much you can do but there are other ways you can meet with Christians. You can always join a bible study group which doesn't meet on Sundays. To your family, it will just look like visiting your friends. You don't have to tell your family everything that you are doing. There should be some amount of independence.

#### **F3. My family is Christian but of a different denomination, I am not sure if I am going back to my family's church and I am worried about their response.**

Your family's response to your leaving the family church depends very much on your attitude towards them. If you show them an attitude of superiority or arrogance or self righteousness then of course you should expect a negative response from your family. Even if you disagreed with your family's church teachings and practices showing them patience and kindness will help them understand why you choose to leave your former church.

#### **F4. My family is arranging my marriage and I am worried about who they will pick. What shall I do?**

Some cultures still practise arranged marriages. It is not necessarily a bad thing. The difficulty arises when they select partners who are not suitable like not being Christian or having completely different values. However, depending on how flexible your parents are, you may be able to reason with them that you are not objecting to an arranged marriage but are willing to consider someone who is Christian. Help them to see that your happiness is also in their own interest and that you are happy to consider Christian candidates

**F5. My parents still expect me to obey them in everything even though I have been independent in Australia. How am I going to obey them when I disagree with so many things? What should I do?**

The key is to show your parents that you are able to make good decisions and that you can be responsible for your own life. Obey your parents where it is possible to obey them but if you disagree with them, try to do it graciously and gently. Avoid arguing with them because it will make the conflict worse. Sometimes conflict cannot be avoided but disagree with them in a way that brings glory to God. You can't demand that your parents trust you, you have to earn their trust by showing that you are trustworthy.

**F6. My parents expect me to worship their gods. I know worshipping idols makes God angry but I am also worried that my parents may reject me.**

Some families have strong obligations of their children to follow the family religion. This is more difficult because there will be conflict. It will be hard to avoid conflict. Once again if there is conflict, do not act in a way that will make it harder for your parents to be Christians in the future. Do not turn them off Christianity by the way you act and behave. Your manner matters a lot. Always give an answer with gentleness in order to help them understand that you have new convictions and not just trying to be difficult. If your parents make you worship idols during a high pressure situation (for example at a funeral, or festival where other relatives are present) then you need to be brave and be willing to stand up for Christ. When that situation occurs make sure that you have made certain preparations before that situation like

- a. You have already told your parents that you have become a Christian.
- b. Your parents are aware of your new faith.

- c. You have discussed what your new faith can and cannot do (like worship idols)
- d. You have already work out what things you can do to show that you are NOT rejecting your family. (example like help with the cooking, cleaning, being hospitable etc). Find somethings that you can do to show that you are still of the family , don't just do nothing for that will push you further away from you family and may even frustrate them more.

**F7. I want to share the gospel with my family but I don't feel comfortable talking about God in my mother tongue.**

If you are more comfortable speaking about God in English but English is not your own mother tongue then you need to start speaking about God in your mother tongue. Start first by reading the bible in your own language. It takes time to get used to speaking about God in your own language. This may feel strange to you because although you expect it to be natural to you but it doesn't feel natural. Give it plenty of time. After that , progress to praying to God in your own language. Start with simple prayers first, just get familiar to the sounds and find a way to speak to God that is comfortable to you. It will always feel weird at first but you will get used to it quickly. Finally join a fellowship group which studies the bible in your language. If we don't make an effort to do this then our families may think that our new found faith in Christ is just part of the western influence that we experienced while studying overseas.

**F8. If I choose to stay in Australia then I won't be able to be with my family.**

Being away from your family is one of the many costs you have to pay for migrating to Australia. If you have family obligations then it may be worth reconsidering your decision to stay in Australia. There may be other reasons why you should go back to your country.

**F9. Others : please specify**

**Work.**

**W1. My type of job requires me to do a lot of travelling, how can I keep myself from drifting away from God and maintain my relationships .**

Some types of Jobs require a lot of travelling and if sustained long term can potentially have damaging effects on your family relationships and spiritual relationships. BUT Sometimes you can't avoid travelling. What do you do in this case? You need to keep watch and always listen carefully to your family and church family. If your family starts to complain that you are always away then this may be a signal for you think about something else. Also if you are always not able to meet up with God's people because you are travelling all the time then perhaps it is time to change your schedule or change your job. No job is worth sacrificing your family or your walk with Jesus.

**W2. My type of job is mostly shift work which means going to church will be difficult.**

Shift workers have hard lives because their timetable is opposite to everybody else's. Their schedule is out of sync with everybody else in society. If you are a shift worker you need to find alternatives for family time, church and rest.

**W3. My type of job is in a city or place away from my friends and family. I have to move to a new area to work.**

When you finish uni, you may have to travel far away to find work. This may mean moving interstate to a new city, to a different country. You will have to build a new network of friends and relationships. Don't always choose the job that has the best pay or the best job satisfaction, take other things into consideration as well. Take into account things like churches, travel to/from, work etc. If you have more than one choice of jobs then choose the one which allows you to keep growing as a Christian, don't just pick the job that has the best pay.

**W4. My type of job is hard find anywhere , I may not be employed when I leave uni.**

There are increasing evidence that today more new graduates are unemployed. It takes them an average of 1 to 1.5 years to find jobs. Some even take longer. This is because the world is still feeling the effects of the GFC. Also there are many more graduates competing for the same jobs. It is not realistic to expect that your degree guarantees a fantastic job. That is no longer true but a marketing ploy by the university. To get a job these days requires

you to be patient and persistent. Don't give up and don't put yourself down. Try not to be too hard on yourself. Don't take the rejections personally. Also learn to be flexible and be willing to do jobs that are different from your university training. Doing another job doesn't mean that your degree is useless because university doesn't only teach you to do one thing only but teaches you how to be resourceful in life.

**W5. My type of job is very demanding and requires a lot of hard work to make it in the industry. There will be a lot more studying and professional exams to take.**

This will be true for many industries where Professional qualifications are required. This means that University is only a starting point for your profession. There are more studies and exams waiting for you after Uni. The hard part of it is that these studies take place while you are working. This in turn will put a lot of time demand on you. Be realistic about what you can achieve professionally but don't make it into an idol.

**W6. I can make a lot of money from my type of job. I am worried that it will become my idol.**

Despite high unemployment rates amongst graduates, the majority of you will find jobs. More than often these will be well paid jobs and you will have more money than you know what to do with. In order to avoid the traps of idolatry and greed start good budgeting practices early. Create healthy spending and saving habits when you are a student. Learn to be generous , support your church and mission groups like AFES or World Vision. Many highly paid financial advisors will tell you that it is not how much people earn that matters it is how much people spend that matters. The less you can live on the better. Think of yourself as stewards of God's money. If it is God's money then our attitudes towards money will be more careful and we will use it for God's glory.

**W7. I have been trained to lead others and my job means I will be in charge of people. It is big responsibility.**

Many of you will be highly qualified and will hold positions of responsibility. Use these positions wisely. Learn to serve those under you and not abuse

them. Do not use your position for personal gain but discharge your responsibilities to give glory to God.

**W8. My job will put me in positions of great influence and responsibility.**

Sometimes your position will put you in gatekeeper roles for example as a high government official or a key person in a governmental department where you can have significant influence on policies. Once again also be a good worker, be answerable to Christ, be totally honest and above board giving people no excuses to falsely accuse you of any wrong doing.

**W9. How do I share the Gospel with my workmates?**

Some Christians argue that the workplace is a mission field and that Christians should preach the Gospel to their workmates. Other Christians argue that the workplace is primarily a place for work and that Christians witness through their behaviour not through their words. The work place or the office is a tricky mission field because of 2 reasons. Firstly, your workmates know you well from the way you work and behave in front of them so they will judge you based on how you work and behave. Christians don't share the gospel to workmates because they are too embarrassed or too ashamed. Secondly, the workplace pays you money to do work and not to do other things. So how should Christians bear witness at work. Well, it is a combination of both godly behaviour, humble attitude and sharing the good news. You should be a good worker so that your workmate trust and respect you. You should be humble in that you do not act self righteously or be superior to others. And lastly if and when the opportunity arises always be prepared to give an answer for your faith.

**W10. I have decided to stay in Australia but what should I do if I can't find a job in Australia?**

You may have heard stories of friends getting good jobs but not everyone will be like that. Migrating to Australia doesn't guarantee you a job. The harsh reality is that you will be competing with many other graduates and you will face racial discrimination as an international student. Your options are to return home to your own country or be willing to wait longer and give yourself more time. In other words don't give up. Or alternatively lower your own

expectations about finding a job. This might mean getting a job that is different from your training at uni. I know of a graduate who endured 6 years as a sales person before finding a job that he was trained in. If you choose to stay in Australia you may have to be patient and not give up.

## **Society and Country.**

### **S1. My country is not kind to Christians. Christians have limited freedom to worship openly.**

Many of you come from countries that is hostile to Christianity. You don't have freedom to worship openly or there are many restriction on Christians. In some places it may even be very dangerous. Now safety is important. Keep yourself and others safe wherever you can but at the same time do NOT be afraid. In other words do not let the country intimidate you or prevent you from worshipping God. There are many brave stories in the Bible about men and women honouring God in such places. It may be difficult for them but God has been glorified. Also the Bible encourages Christians to be law abiding citizens who promote peace. Do not cause unrest and do not give people opportunities to falsely accuse you of wrong doing but rather let your acts of love testify to the glory of Jesus. This is not an easy situation but it a real situation for many of you.

### **S2. My country is incredibly open and liberal. How I do stay godly in such a godless place.**

Countries like Australia are incredibly liberal and godless. Just because places like these claim to be open, doesn't mean that life will be easier for Christians. There will still be struggles for Christians as more and more people become more hostile towards Christianity. Even in western countries like Australia. If anything our spirituality face more danger from first world countries than in third world countries. Worldliness and godlessness are the biggest enemies. The way to stay Godly is to find a good church and a group of Christians that can keep you accountable to God.

### **S3. I have to serve the National service in my country. I don't want to, should I get out?**

Some of you come from countries where National service is compulsory. This is one of the unpleasant truths about smaller nations. You may not have a choice to opt out from national service. What advice can I give ? Sorry to say I don't have any experience in this area. I can't say personally what it is like to serve. I need to stress that that whatever course of action you chose to take make sure that it is legal. Don't break the law just because you don't agree with something the government does. It is not an excuse to break the law.

**S4. My country doesn't really allow people to speak openly against our leaders or government. Should I speak up or remain quiet?**

One of the things we experience in Australia is the ability to question leaders and sometimes even poke fun at them. Even if this were true , there are limits to how much is acceptable before it becomes offensive. To some of us from different cultures it feels rather rude and disrespectful to see people ridiculing the leaders of the country. But it is quite normal here and to some extent it is a good thing to see leaders take criticism. If your country doesn't have this kind of openness be careful of what you say about your government. It can lead to trouble for yourself and your family but It does not you should stay silent all the time. If you choose to speak out , be wise about how you do it.

**S5. My country is dangerous because of war or crime. I am not sure if I should stay in Australia or go home.**

What you can do depends on the options available to you. If you have the option to stay in Australia then there is no shame in choosing to do so for your safety. Some students decide to stay in Australia even though they don't have the option to stay. My advice is don't make this the main goal. Staying in Australia will become an idol. **It may be one of the things you try.**

For those who do go back to their country where there is strife and conflict , it is a very brave thing to do. Even more so if the student have the option to stay. Just because the door is open for you to stay in Australia does not means that you must decide to stay. Sometimes going back is a better option even though it is a difficult decision. People do this for reasons greater than their own comfort like the Gospel. In this case, preparing well for going home becomes incredibly important. Need strategies to survive in your own country.

**S6. My country is very poor and the living conditions are awful. I don't want to live there.**

For Christians considering migration to Australia, I believe that comfort should not be the main reason to do it. Christians accept the fact that suffering is part of life and the goal of their lives is not pursuing comfort but instead to glorify God. Don't make comfort your only reason for migrating to Australia, think of other reasons which benefits God's kingdom. This way your life's goal is to glorify God.

**S7. The authorities are corrupt in my country. I will be forced to act unlawfully.**

We can find all kinds of reasons to justify migration. The point is, taking the easy route is not always the best solution. Sure migrating to Australia may solve the problem of corruption but you will encounter other problems along the way. You can't run away from them all. Grow in Christ by learning how to deal with these kind of problems because you will be facing many of them in life. Running away from problems doesn't solve anything.

**S8. The culture in my country is very traditional and strict. I am worried that I have changed so much that I cannot reintegrate back into it.**

It's true that you probably have changed as a person when you came to Australia. The degree of change depends on how much you are able to adapt to new environments. The fact that you did change means that you are quite adaptable however if you feel that you can't reintegrate into your own culture, it is not because you lack adaptability but it is because you lack the willingness to do so. Perhaps you don't like your own culture anymore or have some negative feelings towards it which is making it hard for you to accept it. If this is true you need to change your attitude towards it. However even if it is not true, people change all the time if they allow it. Even if it is difficult to adapt at first, given enough time it will eventually happen. So you need to be patient.

**S9. The cost of living is too high in my country, I can't afford to buy a house or even a car.**

For Christians, comfort and lifestyle shouldn't be the main reasons for deciding to migrate to Australia for this is a very worldly reason. Christians must also consider where they think God will use them the best. Our investment shouldn't be just in our own comfort in this world but rather for the extension of God's kingdom in eternity.

**S10. The cost of living is very high in Australia. I'm not sure if I can survive financially here.**

This will be a problem for everybody anywhere in the world. We can't run away from this. Whether we stay in Australia or anywhere in the world, Christians need to learn contentment in all situations. It is not how much we earn that matters it is how much we spend that matters. A great prayer of the Bible is Proverbs 30:7-9.

**Accommodation and living. (stopped here )**

**A1. Real estate is really expensive in my country. I can't afford it.**

See answer to S9, S10.

**A2. Transportation is really inconvenient in my country.**

See answer to S6

**A3. The food in my country is cheap and tasty but incredibly unhygienic. I can't really stomach the food anymore.**

See Answer to S9,S10

**Christlike discipleship.**

**C1. I will be moving to a new place, where there might not be a good church. What shall I do about finding a church?**

If there is a good church (ie. caring people, faithful to scriptures and mission minded) in your new place then make an effort to go there. But more than likely you will not find a church like that in your new place or even if there was one it may be too inconvenient to go there. Finding a church and being part of a church is very important so make every effort to join one. Remember that there are no perfect churches, each one will have different problems. The

thing we need to do is work out if that church is a place where you can serve people and serve God. The attitude that we should have is “how can we serve the people at church” rather than what the church can do for me. The thing that will make the difference is your own attitude towards people. You will need to take initiative to know people and to persevere.

One word of caution however is that you need to beware of cults or churches which teach the wrong things. There are many of them around and sometimes it is hard to tell what is wrong with these churches. If you are not sure about a church you can always contact us and ask us about it.

**C2. Christians in my country are not like Christians in Australia, they are not as friendly and as open. I have a hard time getting to know them.**

This may or may not be your experience. Some people actually say the opposite ie. that the churches in Australia are not as friendly. Doesn't really matter where you are or what church you are in. Knowing people and building relationships take time and effort. Sometimes people may open up to you, other times people won't. If you spent a great deal of effort trying to know people but you are still not getting to know people then perhaps it may be a good reason to find another church or alternatively try to change the culture of the church yourself by being a warm and hospitable member of the church yourself.

**C3. The Bible studies aren't bible studies because I can't ask questions like in my campus groups. The Bible studies are more like sermons and if there were discussions they are superficial and not systematic.**

You have had a tremendous privilege to come to Australia and experience good Bible teaching and perhaps even be trained in leading Bible discussions. Not many other places are blessed with this. If your attitude is to serve others instead of complaining about the style of teaching in your new place then you will find ways to grow in your understanding of Jesus and also find ways to help the church. You will need to be patient and be gentle as you do this because people might not always listen to the new person. So you have to do it carefully and don't look down on others just because they do things differently. 1 Corinthians 13 says that knowledge without love is empty. Always seek to serve others with what you know.

However, there are also other ways to keep yourself growing and learning if your church is doing that for you. Reading books or using the resources on our website [focusonthegospel.yolasite.com](http://focusonthegospel.yolasite.com) may help. It will continually be updated with new resources , you can always look there for help.

**C4. I don't feel comfortable speaking about my faith in my first language, I am more comfortable in English.**

This is true for someone whose first language is not English but who heard the Gospel in English , they became Christian through speaking English and read the English Bible. Although they speak in their mother tongue very well it just feels weird to speak about their faith in their own language. This is a small problem and can be easily solved. However it requires effort and practice to get over the language problem. Start by praying short prayers in your own language. Get used to the sounds and the terms in your language.

Progressively make your prayer longer until you are comfortable with it. Once you get used to it then you can progress to other things like reading the Bible aloud in your own language and speaking to others. It will be a great help to you if you understand and can talk about God in your own language.

**C5. I have a couple of job offers in two very different places and I am not sure which job God wants me to take up?**

Believe it or not this is not a difficult decision. Hopefully your university education had trained you to make decisions like this because you will be making lots of these in your workplace and in life. The job that offers the best pay or the best promotions are not necessarily the best option. Which job you choose ultimately depends on your priorities. This means that having the right priorities are very important. Remember to make your choices on where you will spend eternity or what pleases God. This may not be a complete answer or an answer you like, but God will is very clear about choices in life. You pick the ones that allows you to glorify Christ. **Colossians 3:1**

**Migration.**

**M1. I have the option to stay on in Australia but I can't decide whether I should stay or not?**

Many graduates have the option to stay in Australia and choose to stay for different reasons. Let me just say that the choices you make should not be driven purely by lifestyle reasons but you also need to think about what is best for God's kingdom. For some of you that will mean to stay in Australia and you need to work out how you glorify God here. For others of you, you may choose to go back, even though you can stay. That is commendable and I would suggest that everybody go through the process of working out whether to stay or not to stay. Going through the process means praying about it, talking to various people like your pastor or to a Focus leader , weighing up the options and making an informed decision so that the choice you make is a result of a careful decision. Don't choose the option that everybody else is doing.

Colossians 3:1

### **M2. I want to stay in Australia but my visa doesn't allow me to stay. What can I do to stay?**

If your visa doesn't allow you to stay in Australia the best course of action is to go back to your home country. Try not to make migration your life's goal but learn to be like Paul in Phil 4:11-12 to be contented in whatever circumstances God places you in. However there may be one or two good reasons for seeking migration. These could be related to safety (where it dangerous for you to return home ) or related to marriage (you found someone who lives in Australia)

### **M3. I have PR in Australia but I can't seem to find a job, I don't know what to do? Go back to my home country of origin to stay on?**

One of the current myths about migration is that PR will help you find a job. Nothing can be further from the truth. In the current economic climate, jobs are not guaranteed. Furthermore the harsh reality is this, graduates who are non-native English speakers face a lot of discrimination even in Australia. There are costs involved whether you choose to stay or choose to go home. Which option you choose depends which costs you are willing to pay. Whatever the case, if you have decided on one option, be patient if you can't find a job and be willing to work hard because the job that you eventually do find may be one that you may not like or have not been trained in. But you need it.