

## The Bad That Might Come Out of a Good Bible College or Seminary

Steve Burchett

God used my time at a Christian college and seminary in profound ways. Doctrinal positions were established, ministry partnerships were forged, and a love for the local church was enflamed. I don't regret going.



However, Bible colleges and seminaries are places where attitudes and actions may result that are harmful to the very group these schools are supposed to support—the local church.

What bad might come out of even the best Bible schools?

### **Students might turn into poor church members.**

I saw firsthand at both college and seminary students whose total involvement in a local church entailed showing up for a Sunday morning service, chatting for a few minutes with friends (often fellow students) before and after the meeting, and then going home. When your studying the Bible so much for school and enjoying great fellowship with other believers in that setting, it's easy to dismiss the necessity of body life in a local church.

Understandably, maximizing the time training for ministry is vital, but is it wise to let it remove you from eager participation in the local church? It is God's will that we *all* are joined to a local body of believers, under the guidance of elders (Titus 1:5; Phil 1:1), striving to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24). Some students should seriously consider taking a class or two less each semester so that they can remain enthusiastic church members. They will be amazed at how their "training" is actually multiplied if they do that.

### **Knowledge gained might create unloving attitudes and behaviors.**

Everyone agrees that the individual attending Bible college or seminary is spending more time studying Scripture than the typical churchgoer. Yet increased knowledge can lead to pride and impatience. But sweet, godly older ladies are just not impressed with one's grasp of Greek participles.

I was a member of a wonderful little church my final year of seminary. The people were some of the most loving Christians I have ever known, and they were eager to learn and apply Scripture. The pastor carefully and patiently taught the church's zealous, yet untrained, church leaders. I walked into a meeting before anyone got there one evening and made fun of one leader's ignorance. "This guy is nice, but he just doesn't get it. He hasn't read the books we have read, has he, pastor?" I was a condescending young man. Thankfully, my pastor confronted me, and I repented.

Bible school students would be wise to memorize First Corinthians 13, which begins, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

### **Students might go into debt.**

I do not understand why Bible colleges and seminaries let their students incur debt, but they do. And then what happens? "The borrower becomes the lender's slave" (Prov 22:7). Taking extra time in school so that you don't incur debt is liberating and ultimately a way to bless other believers because of that freedom. Without debt, a student can go *wherever* his Master sends him, *whenever* He calls.