A Challenge to an Adult Christian Faith

Sally North is very proud of her niece Angie. Despite living in different cities, the two have developed a close bond over the course of Angie’s childhood: from her birth to her recent nineteenth birthday. Angie’s first year at a major Midwestern university appeared to go well, as she adapted to life away from home for the first time. Sally’s only real concern recently arose from a series of letters that Angie had written to her over the past six months.

After attending two churches during her first year at college, Angie has decided to drop the idea of regularly attending church services. Sally understands this choice is often made by young people of Angie’s age, but is worried that such a decision at an impressionable age would lead to a longer-term break with Angie’s long-standing Christian faith.

Sally knows that her sister’s home had been one in which regular attendance at church was an integral part of family life. Sally is a registered nurse, having graduated from the nursing program of a similarly large university. She accepted Christ in her sophomore year. She feels her Christian faith is stronger because of the exposure she received and resultant choices she had to make while in college. In contrast, Sally’s sister and her husband have been committed Christians since both were baptized in their early teens. Having been married in their early 20s, they have always had each other to confide in and look to for support. Although her sister’s home had been a solid foundation for the faith of both daughters while they were growing up, Sally felt that they may have inadvertently sheltered their daughters too much from diverse world views.

Beth, three years older than Angie, had attended a Christian college not far from their suburban Chicago home. She had decided to go to college with her friends from church. Those friends provided Beth with a strong support network that helped her through several difficult situations. Angie had decided to go to the large university at least in part because she wanted to experience a less-structured environment than Beth’s and be exposed to new kids and different ways of thinking about life. From the letters she has sent Sally, those desires are being satisfied.

The results of several research projects focusing on college students raise Sally’s level of anxiety over Angie’s decision. A survey by LifeWay Research, which is connected to the Southern Baptist Convention, found that 70 percent of young adult Protestants who may have been church-goers in high school quit attending church by age twenty-three and failed to return by age thirty. Another recent study by the Higher Education Research Institute concluded that the percentage of college freshmen with either no religious preference or who had not attended church in the past year rose to a new high. In that survey, 19 percent of those freshmen had no
religious preference at all. Once in college, students are exposed to lifestyle options that further challenge their faith. Anti-Christian, even humanist, philosophies are common among many of the professors at large universities. Drugs and alcohol consumption are widespread, with nearly 50 percent of college students admitting to binge drinking in the previous year. Finally, despite a falling percentage in high school, more than 70 percent of college students claim to be sexually experienced. It would be virtually impossible for Angie to avoid exposure to these forms of behavior.

Sally has decided to visit Angie next weekend to attend the university’s homecoming football game. She recognizes that this could be a pivotal time for Angie. On the one hand, Sally feels the need to strengthen Angie’s faith without appearing judgmental. On the other hand, she wants to provide a challenge for Angie to stand up as a person of faith.

She remembers the comment made by the actor Kurt Cameron, “We are afraid of being rejected, which is a pretty wimpy thing to be afraid of. We’re afraid that someone is not going to like us. We’re afraid of being looked at as an unintelligent, obnoxious religious fanatic if we share Jesus Christ with somebody.”

Sally knows that she has a very limited time to advise Angie. She wants her advice to be grounded in scripture. She has come to you for help in deciding what scripture would be most appropriate for this situation. You are to meet with Sally tomorrow for lunch to discuss your recommended approach.

**ASSIGNMENT**

Prepare scripturally based advice for Sally as she addresses her niece’s decision to stop attending church.
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: