

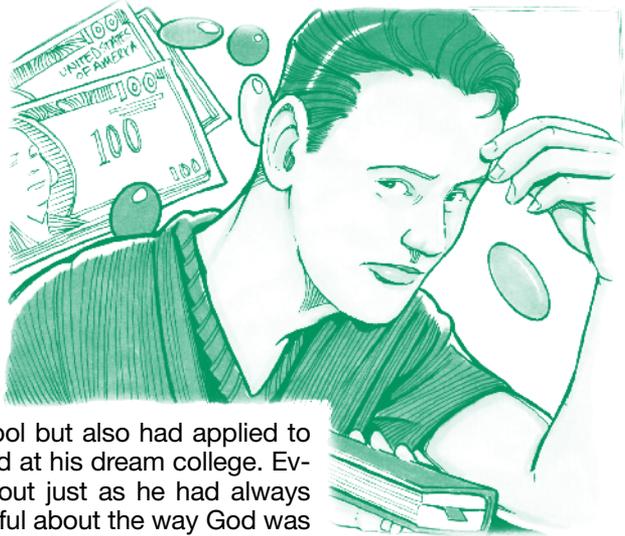
# Christian Life

Part 1 of 13 sections—June 5, 2022

## *Finding the Right Path*

by Deborah Sergeant

**B**RYCE had grown up with the colors of his favorite college all over his room. He had plenty of matching attire too. His older brother, Colton, had attended there five years prior and had brought him plenty of shirts, pennants, and hats. Bryce had now not only finished high school but also had applied to and had been accepted at his dream college. Everything was working out just as he had always hoped. Bryce felt grateful about the way God was directing his life.



Like Colton had done, Bryce was going to rely mostly on his grandparents' investment fund for covering his school expenses. They had set it up when the boys were born, and providing he worked summers, he would be able to pay for his degree program easily.

Both of his grandparents had died last spring. Bryce hoped to honor their memory by obtaining his degree with the assistance their generosity afforded him.

Bryce wanted to manage his own landscaping company someday. While he had been working for others for a few summers now, he lacked the business savvy needed to run his

own business. He had already seen a few of Colton's friends try launching companies without stable backgrounds in business and fail miserably. He did not want to follow in their steps.

Since summer had begun in earnest, Bryce especially looked forward to going to college. Upon turning eighteen, he decided to cash out the investments in preparation for paying tuition. His grandparents had always taken care of it, but now he could take control.

He made an appointment and took the paperwork to the financial adviser's office. After a short wait, he was sitting in the office of the fi-

nancial adviser, who entered the information from Bryce's paperwork. After a few moments, the adviser's frown worried Bryce.

"It looks like the investments your grandparents made have struggled in recent years," he said gently, as if to soften the blow.

Bryce felt a growing unease deep in his gut.

"Struggled? How?"

"It seems they invested in some companies that did not do as well as we would hope," the adviser said. "I'm terribly sorry. I'm sure you're expecting more than \$3,000, but that's just about all you have left."

Bryce felt sucker punched. For several, long, sickening moments, the room spun around him.

"I'm guessing this was your college fund?"

Bryce nodded.

"I advised a savings plan that's safer, more reliable than this one. That's what we started for Colton. But your grandparents didn't have as much money to invest when you came along. Their business had a significant downturn about the time you were born. I think they hoped

to make up for the lack of money by making riskier investments. I'm sorry it didn't work out."

Bryce completed the funds transfer and left quickly. It seemed as if both the fund and his future had just evaporated.

At home, he spilled out the story to his mother.

"I wish Dad and I could pay for it," she said softly. "We'll cosign for a loan, if that will help."

Bryce had thought of that too; however, loans required repayment, and starting a business would mean even more expenses in addition to that. He flung himself onto the couch and buried his face in his hands. It seemed he had no easy way to go to school this fall—or ever.

Colton showed up for dinner unannounced, as he often did. As the family settled in to eat after prayer, the usual brotherly banter between Bryce and his brother was noticeably missing. Mom must have told Colton.

Finally, Colton spoke up. "Hey, I'm really sorry about the college fund."

"Well, don't be. It's not like what I want matters," Bryce quipped. Wide eyes from all around the table met his. "I just want to poke around in the dirt, so why should anyone care?"

"Bryce, no one ever said that," Dad cautioned.

"But you're thinking it," Bryce said. "You don't think I have a chance to start a real business, so why should you care?"

Bryce stormed from the table. He knew he was acting childish. Yet, his late grandparents should have known better! Even half of what Colton received would be better than \$3,000.

Maybe he should just go for it, take out the loans, and hope for the best. He pulled out his phone and entered

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a few figures. If his business went as he had hoped and he made some big-time sacrifices, he could possibly pay off all the loans by the time he was forty-five, maybe even forty if he scrimped. He sighed deeply.

Bryce spotted his Bible on his desk. The Holy Spirit drew him to its pages. He knew he would not find thousands of dollars there, but he could find wisdom.

He turned to Proverbs and began to flip through the pages. His eyes settled in on the twenty-second chapter, the seventh verse in particular: “The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”

Well, with a loan that size, he would be the “servant” of a loan company for half of his adult life! He could go to the community college to save money instead. But that was not free either. If he did not go to college at all, he would have to work for someone else, making a lot less money, and it would not give him the business acumen he needed. He still might never live independently for a long, long time. Bryce massaged his temples.

*Help me, Lord. I don't know what to do here. It's like I don't have any good choices. Please help me. In Jesus' name.*

A knock sounded at his door, then Colton popped his head around.

“Hey. Is it OK if I come in?”

Bryce nodded.

Colton helped himself to Bryce's desk chair.

“I did some research after dinner,” he said.

Bryce grinned.

“That's one way to get out of doing the dishes,” he teased.

The Ames family rule was that whoever did not cook washed dishes.

“Your hands look awfully dry as

well,” Colton countered. “Anyway, I found something I think might help you get your landscaping business going.”

He held out his phone, which displayed a website from a state-sponsored apprenticeship program.

“Colton, this is for people like pipefitters and bricklayers,” Bryce said as he skimmed the site.

“Keep reading.”

As he did, he learned that the program had been extended. Now it included all sorts of hands-on trades, including landscaping.

“You start out at a livable wage while you learn from the best in the business,” Colton said. “That includes some part-time classroom work to learn all the business management, and during the day, you keep doing what you do best. And they give wage increases to keep up with the cost of living.”

Bryce's eyes grew wider as Colton spoke. Maybe this was God's way of providing for his future.

“So you're saying I'll get paid while I learn and I'll end up learning what I'll need to know?”

“That's what I'm reading here,” Colton said, pointing to the screen.

Bryce skimmed the list of landscapers with apprenticeship openings.

“I'd love to work with any of these companies. They're all top-notch. And I'm not stuck there for years and years. Right after I'm done, I can start my own company.”

Colton grinned like he had invented apprenticeship.

“And spending the next four years in a classroom didn't seem like your thing anyway, right, little brother?”

“Right!” ★