Our work at Getwell continues to amaze many! With somewhat of a decreased number compared to some congregations, many wonder how our giving on the Lord’s Day is so good, and how we are preaching the Gospel by radio, Gospel meetings, bulletin, pulpit, classroom, THE SPIRITUAL WORD publication, and Spiritual Sword Lectureship. The answer is we believe, an example to others: Dedicated brethren are responsible. We think the members at Getwell are to be highly commended.

Paul wrote, “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (I Cor. 1:18). This is not “foolish preaching” but what some considered foolish preaching of a crucified Savior! Many do not appreciate the salvation that is afforded to all because of the cross (Jn. 3:16). To enjoy the benefits of the cross one must hear the Gospel (Rom. 10:17), believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior of the world (Jn. 8:21, 24), turn from his/her sinful life in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), willingly make a public confession of his/her faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and submit to being baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). A faithful life that follows this obedience will assure the beauties of a Heavenly home eternally (Rev. 2:10). Why would anyone consider that which will bring peace to our lives, to our homes, to the church, and to our nation to be “foolish preaching”? 
That Holy Spirit Baptism Saves?

It is sad to any good Bible student to hear some talk today about being saved by Holy Spirit baptism. There is no passage in the Bible that connects Holy Spirit baptism and salvation! This cannot be a teaching of faith, since it is not taught in the Bible (Rom. 10:17). Though there are several baptisms mentioned in the Bible, the baptism of suffering, baptism of John, baptism of fire, etc., we must study to know which is the "one baptism," spoken of by Paul 65 years after the church was established, that is connected to salvation today (Eph. 4:4-6). We do know from the Scriptures the following: 1. Jesus Christ is the only one who would administer Holy Spirit baptism (Matt. 3:11); 2. Jesus Christ promised this baptism to the apostles, and kept His promise (Lk. 24:48-49; Acts 2:1-4); 3. no one today can administer Holy Spirit baptism, nor is it promised to anyone today! Jesus said that men are to administer water baptism for the salvation of the lost today, and it is baptism in water (not the Holy Spirit) that saves today (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 10:48). We can know, with a little study, that Holy Spirit baptism never saved anyone. The apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit AFTER THEY HAD BEEN BAPTIZED FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; 1:77). Jesus said of them that they were already clean from sin (Jn. 15:3). The Scriptures do not teach that the apostles were baptized in water again at Pentecost. In Acts 10, Cornelius and his household, Gentiles, received an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the apostles on Pentecost (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:15-17), but this outpouring was BEFORE THEIR SALVATION BY WATER BAPTISM (Acts 10:44-48). Hence, we must conclude that, since the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit AFTER they were baptized, and Cornelius and his household received the outpouring BEFORE their salvation in water baptism, HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM NEVER SAVED ANYONE. When the Word was confirmed by the apostles (Heb. 2:1-4), and those on whom they laid their hands died (Acts 8:18), miraculous power by Holy Spirit baptism ended, just as Paul said it would (I Cor. 13:8-10). There is only ONE BAPTISM for salvation today. That is water baptism (Mk. 16:15-16; Eph. 4:4-6).
When I made the professional transition from high school principal to college professor, I had an opportunity to observe what occurs among most college students during the 48 months after high school graduation. For many, the next step in their journey to becoming an independent adult is choosing a college or university environment.

Usually, four major decisions are made by young adults during the 48 months after high school graduation. First, most determine if the faith of their parents is in fact their own personal faith. Second, decisions will be made that will impact their career path. Third, during these critical years most will determine the criteria regarding their choice of a marriage partner. Fourth, most will solidify the major priorities that will become the driving force of their lives. Major forces include affluence, self-expression, love and belonging, achievement, respect, serving others and teaching others about Jesus.

The external influences that impact the decisions of college students include the philosophical agendas of college professors, the attitudes and behaviors of college classmates who become close friends and associates, and those to whom they listen and from whom they seek advice.

Trend data for the past four decades confirm that most of our young people who attend a Christian university remain faithfully involved in our congregations and often become their leaders. Unfortunately, the same trend data confirm that the majority of students who attend secular or non-private universities become disassociated with the church and often separate themselves completely. The environments created by institutions of higher learning effectively enhance the intellectual growth of students. Tragically, secular universities seldom value and often aggressively attempt to stifle spiritual growth.

Two important questions must be considered when choosing a university. The first question must address the academic standing of the school. The following must be asked: “Will the school being considered provide the quality of program and level of opportunity to succeed professionally in a very competitive world?” The second question must also address the financial costs associated with a college education.

The university or college of choice must provide a quality program that prepares its students to succeed professionally in a very competitive world. It is equally as important that the institution of choice nurture the maturation and not the destruction of a student’s Christian faith. Christ-centered institutions of higher learning are academically equal to the public universities and often surpass them. This assertion is easily verified by the fact that our brotherhood-related schools are accredited by the same agencies as the secular universities. My professional connection with Freed-Hardeman University would certainly affirm this assessment.

In our attempt to guide our college-age young people in their choice of universities, we should remember that our Christian schools are academically solid, student-focused and spiritually nurturing. We must also remember that the university experience will make a lifelong impact on our young people.

The actual costs of attaining a degree from any university should be considered. Attending a Christian university is generally considered more expensive than public institutions. Do a comparative “bottom line cost analysis” of each institution being considered rather than only the cost of tuition. As is the case with any major purchase, the lowest price is not always the best value. The uncompromising academics, the agendas of Christian professors, the influence of Christ-minded friends, and the spiritual priorities of the institution are definitely “value added.”

The purpose of this article is to underscore the wisdom of encouraging our young people to pursue their formal education in one of our brotherhood colleges or universities. Within the framework of choosing the most appropriate institution, it is imperative that their higher education experience occurs in a setting that deliberately fosters their spiritual growth.

Ron Butterfield is an elder for the White Avenue Church of Christ in Henderson, Tenn., and is professor emeritus at Freed-Hardeman University, having served as dean of the School of Education. He may be reached at rbutterfield@fhu.edu.