Episode #3. Don’t judge a book by its cover

Chris: Emily, I read an article this week about the ways students are choosing where to apply to college. The competition is fierce! It takes a lot of knowledge to be successful in today’s America.

Emily: Chris, you’ve been out of college for years. Are you just thinking of this in abstract terms?

Chris: Not entirely, Emily. A cousin of mine is in the 11th grade and she is already hard at work looking at many different colleges to continue her education. She asked for my advice, and that’s what got me thinking about all of this. You know, what they say these days... a “master’s is the new bachelor’s, and bachelor’s is the new high school diploma.”

Emily: That definitely seems to be the case. Let’s see... Is she a good student?

Chris: Oh yeah, she’s a straight-A student.

Emily: So, she might be thinking of applying to an Ivy League school.

Chris: Schools like Harvard, Yale, Stanford, or Princeton?

Emily: Stanford is not an Ivy League school.

Chris: Really? I thought Stanford was one of the best schools in the country.

Emily: Well, yes, it is. But it’s not part of the Ivy League. This school was founded in the late 19th century in Stanford, California. All eight Ivy League universities are in the Northeastern United States. Seven of them were founded before the American Revolution.

Chris: Well, she is looking at some of those but, one thing I have said to her is don’t judge a book by its cover. One can get an excellent education elsewhere. Besides, Ivy League schools are so expensive!

Emily: It’s true. An education at one of these institutions can cost an arm and a leg.

Chris: And, as far as I know, graduates with a Bachelor’s degree from Ivy League schools don’t always get the highest paid jobs compared to graduates from other schools.

Emily: This is also true.

Chris: So, what’s the point besides having an Ivy League school on your résumé...

Emily: Like you said, Chris, don’t judge a book by its cover. These schools have huge impacts on their communities and the world beyond. For example, of the forty-five men who have served as President of the United States, fifteen have graduated from an Ivy League university.

Chris: Emily, I am not denying that these prestigious schools open a lot of doors. But the world is changing faster and faster every day. Some argue that graduating with a defined skill is more valuable than a well-rounded education.

Emily: I agree with this, too.

Chris: You do? Now I’m completely confused!

Emily: I think we are saying the same thing, Chris! Your cousin should not judge a book by its cover. An Ivy league school may not be the best choice for her in the end. The best advice you can give her is to keep doing the research, visit as many different universities as she can and meet students and professors before deciding where to apply.

Chris: Yeah right, that’s exactly what a 16-year-old wants to hear: do your “homework!”