Case study 4

**CASE STUDY**

Angela, a young Black woman, comes from a close-knit and very religious family that has always taken great pride in her accomplishments. Despite some minor rebelliousness during high school, Angela maintains close ties to her family and considers her parents and younger sister to be her best friends. A solid student all through school and a leader in her church’s youth ministry, Angela knew for a long time that she wanted to go to college to be a teacher. Angela’s father attended community college for 2 years, and her mother graduated from high school. Both parents were delighted when Angela became the first member of the family to pursue a baccalaureate degree.

Now in her first year at a state university in the South, she is getting used to college and to life in a dormitory. She enjoys the freedom and the challenge of college but is also experiencing some problems getting along with other students. Her roommate, a young White woman named Jen, poses a particular dilemma for her. It bothers Angela that Jen never goes to church, never prays, frequently spends the night at her boyfriend’s apartment, and is an outspoken agnostic. Jen makes various comments about what she has learned in her religion and philosophy classes that trouble Angela, who firmly believes that Jen lacks a proper moral center. Angela has tried to convince Jen about the importance of belief in God and the consequences of her disbelief, but to no avail. Because it is important to Angela to maintain her beliefs, she starts to avoid being in the room when Jen is there and considers finding a new roommate.

During the spring semester, Angela develops a serious infection that confines her to bed and makes her unable to attend classes or to care for herself. She is both surprised and pleased when Jen comes to her assistance. Jen runs errands for her, brings her meals, and does her laundry. Even Jen’s boyfriend pitches in to help Angela make up her missed assignments. She is touched by their generosity and confused about how this goodness can coexist with a nonreligious perspective on life. These are the kind of people she had thought were immoral. When the time comes to plan for next year’s housing arrangement, Angela is uncertain. Her friends in the ministry counsel her to find a more appropriate roommate. Yet Angela cannot reconcile Jen’s kindness toward her with what she believes to be an immoral lifestyle. This disjunction causes her great distress. She decides to seek out a counselor in the University Counseling Center to help her with her decision.