

The Place of Apologetics in Campus Ministry

David W. Greear II

Today's secular college campus is truly a "marketplace of ideas." The typical student is exposed to a plethora of new ideas, philosophies, and worldviews. Many of these students are also away from home and are thus forming, perhaps for the first time, their own personal philosophy of life. They are often sifting through the various worldviews they encounter in search of truth and answers to life's "big questions." Thus they are very impressionable and open to both truth and error. Many students are more open to the gospel than they have been in the past or ever will be again in the future.

This is also a critical time for students from Christian homes who, unlike their peers in Christian college, will often either fully accept or reject the faith of their parents during this period of life. This is because they will typically be forced to defend or deny their beliefs in the face of postmodernism, multiculturalism, humanism, socialism, atheism, Darwinism, and various other "isms."

For these reasons it is wise to include an apologetics emphasis in a secular college campus ministry. First Peter 3:15 commands us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." Apologetics can be used "offensively" in order to share with students the "reason[s] for our hope." Apologetics can also be used "defensively" against all intellectual or philosophical attacks against God, the Bible, or the Christian faith.

Practically speaking, such an emphasis can be implemented in several ways. One method is by presenting apologetic themes in lectures or Bible studies (stand-alone or in a series). These could be led by the campus worker or by guest speakers who are specialists in the subject matter. Themes might include the creation vs. evolution debate, the Bible and archaeology, the reliability of the Bible, the uniqueness of Christianity, the resurrection of Christ, and similar themes. If well-advertised, such lectures have the potential of drawing a good crowd, especially if they are scheduled early in the semester.

A variation of the apologetic lecture is to present both sides of a topic with a campus debate or forum. The benefit of a debate is that it will inevitably draw a better crowd than a lecture and give your ministry much visibility on campus.¹ However, there are drawbacks to this method. An obvious negative is that we are giving opponents of Christ an open forum to espouse their unbelief, and we never know exactly what they will say. Therefore, we need to be careful about whom we select to represent us in a debate and to bathe him in prayer for wisdom! It is also important to find an opponent who is willing to keep the debate cordial and stick to the issues; otherwise both sides could

look bad and the Christian's testimony could be harmed. In light of 2 Timothy 2:23-26, we should give serious consideration to this danger.

There are also many good apologetic videos available that can be used effectively on campus or in an apartment or dorm setting. These work well with small groups or with individuals. Excellent titles are available on the subject of creation² and other apologetic themes. Often, unsaved students who feel intimidated about attending a Bible study (or more likely are simply too apathetic or lazy to do so) are willing to watch a video. It requires no effort on their part!

A second useful tool to use on campus is apologetic literature. Officially recognized student organizations are given the opportunity to set up literature tables at various locations on campus. In addition to gospel tracts and brochures about church and the campus ministry, tracts with apologetic themes can be used.³ We have used several over the years and have found that students are much more likely to take these than the ordinary tracts. The apologetic tracts typically try to answer difficult questions and therefore rouse the attention of curious students. Books on apologetic themes are also excellent, but the expense can be prohibitive in some cases.⁴

Finally, we should simply make it clear to students that we are available to answer their difficult questions. In addition to personal assistance and literature we can also direct them to a few good websites that provide excellent Biblical answers to tough questions.⁵

There are many benefits to such an apologetics emphasis. One of the most obvious benefits is that unbelieving students can be exposed to God and His revelation of Himself, be it "natural" revelation (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-20) or "special" revelation. Many students who would never come to a Bible study or church might be willing to come to a lecture, video, or debate that revolves around an apologetic theme.

Not only can apologetics be used to draw a crowd, but often it can be an effective means to grab the attention of unbelieving students. At the very least this results in an open opportunity to share the gospel. Students who would never read a tract might listen to a presentation of the gospel that follows an apologetic presentation. Apologetics grabs their attention and arouses their curiosity so that we can present the gospel message.⁶

A third benefit of an apologetic emphasis is that it presents the opportunity to answer legitimate questions about the Bible. Such questions are often obstacles for unbelieving students, but when they are answered it prepares a way for the gospel message. As a result of the anti-Bible climate in their classrooms (and in many parts of our society),

students have false opinions or legitimate questions about the Bible and Christianity that serve as intellectual roadblocks preventing them from receiving the truth about Christ. It is as if we need to remove the weeds of humanistic and postmodern thinking in order to prepare the soil for the seed of God's Word.

A fourth benefit of using apologetics is that the arguments reveal the objective truth of the gospel in a real world. These arguments establish a basis of evidence or faith that is far more likely (under the Spirit's control) to produce genuine conversions. A subjective, self-centered presentation of the gospel appeals to perceived human needs but is not a sufficient motivation for true salvation. Many presentations of the gospel, both on and off campus, offer a "try it and see" attitude about God's marvelous plan rather than an absolute trust that relies on Christ alone as the means for salvation from sin. It is possible to persuade students to "pray the sinner's prayer" when they really have no understanding that their sins are an offense against the holy Creator God. This is particularly true on the average secular campus where the postmodern/multicultural mindset rejects any kind of objective reality, especially in the realm of religion. Students with this mindset may actually believe in God in a vague sense and be attracted to the promises, real or distorted, of the gospel. But if they have doubts or misunderstandings about truths, such as their accountability to a Creator God or the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, their hearts are not prepared for the gospel. If students struggle with the exclusiveness of the gospel for salvation or even the character of God (in light of the existence of evil and suffering in the world, for instance), they are probably not ready to trust Christ fully. Apologetics should establish the foundational truths of the gospel.

Finally, although we typically think of apologetics being primarily for the purpose of reaching the lost, it is equally useful for strengthening Christians' faith. Christian students, who are accustomed to having their faith attacked, can be greatly encouraged in their faith through the use of apologetics as it verifies the Bible and their beliefs. Apologetics can also help believing students become better equipped to share their faith with their peers.

In spite of the many benefits, it would be unwise to proceed with the use of apologetics in a campus ministry without first considering the potential dangers and excesses. First, there is the danger of intellectual pride, which uses apologetics simply to win arguments (Col. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:24, 25). It is possible to win an argument and lose a man's soul in the process. If we convey a proud and arrogant attitude; if we are unwilling to listen; if our tone is angry, harsh, or demeaning, even the most brilliant of apologetic arguments will probably not have a positive effect on the students.

Second, there is the danger of underestimating the depth of man's depravity and thereby substituting apologetics

for the indispensable elements of the Word of God and the Spirit of God in a man's conversion (John 16:8; 1 Pet. 1:23).⁷ No one can argue a man into the Kingdom of God! Unless the Holy Spirit illumines and draws a man, the greatest of apologetic arguments will have no effect on him. His mind is blinded (Rom. 3:11a; 2 Cor. 4:4) and his will is hardened (Rom. 3:11b, 12). "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still!"⁸ For this reason, debates and apologetic lectures alone are never sufficient to bring a man to Christ. They must be joined with or followed by a clear gospel presentation.

Third, there is the danger of using outdated, disproven, or even blatantly untrue apologetic arguments. It is never ethical or wise to use arguments from questionable sources, such as the Internet, that cannot be reasonably authenticated. To do so is to harm the cause of Christ by inviting skepticism against ourselves, the Bible, and the Christian faith in general. The use of spurious apologetic arguments could potentially harden a thinking student for years to come. Therefore, it is important to do our homework and verify our facts as much as possible. Examples of spurious or dubious Christian evidences that pop up frequently today might include:⁹

- NASA computers have found evidence of a missing day, proving Joshua's "long day."
- Fossil footprints in the Paluxy River bed in Texas prove that dinosaurs and man co-existed.

- A dead plesiosaur caught by a Japanese fishing vessel near New Zealand in 1977 shows that dinosaurs still exist today.
- The Ark of the Covenant, Noah's ark, the Ten Commandments, and a sample of Christ's blood have been discovered.¹⁰

Trying to tie all loose ends together to answer questions or explain dilemmas is another potential danger. The key here is that none of us have all the answers. Although legitimate science, archaeology, history, and philosophy can help us by supplementing and verifying Biblical data, the Bible never claims to tell us everything there is to know (Deut. 29:29). There are some questions that Scripture simply leaves unanswered, and we are unwise if we attempt to dogmatically prove our theological preferences to students in such areas. The thinking student will demand proof and see through unfounded dogmatism.

Finally, and perhaps most important, is the danger of trying to "prove" Scripture with apologetics, thus unintentionally placing human reason above the authority of Scripture. We should always begin our apologetics with the presupposition that the Bible is true and accurate, regardless of the findings of science or philosophy. Then we can use legitimate arguments from science or philosophy to confirm and defend the Bible. However, if we assume that

Many students are more open to the gospel than they have been in the past or ever will be again in the future.

the Bible must fit with the prevailing theories of science or philosophy, it will be necessary to reinterpret the Bible in order to force it to fit.

In conclusion, apologetics can be a useful tool in the ministry toolbox, but it is only a tool. It has limitations. It can never substitute for the Holy Spirit's application of God's Word in the human heart. Because this is true, students will not be born again through apologetics alone. However, the potential benefits of apologetics used appropriately and in conjunction with the gospel message are great, especially on a college campus. Apologetics may not be a tool that appeals to every student, but it appeals to many students. Therefore we should strive to use apologetics wisely for God's glory and submit it to the Lord of the Harvest for the results.

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¹ The assumption that more will likely be saved from the larger crowd is not necessarily valid, however. It is actually harder to work the gospel into a debate format. We did hold one such debate, and although it was our best attended event ever, we know of no professions of faith as a result.

² *A Question of Origins* is particularly good on this subject.

³ One example is the "Questions" series of tracts published by *Answers in Genesis*. Each features a perplexing/controversial question. Titles include: *Is There Really a God? What Really Happened to the Dinosaurs? Where Did Cain Get His Wife? Why Is there Death and Suffering?* Also good, but brief, is *Radio Bible Class's* "10 Reasons to Believe" series. Titles include *10 Reasons to Believe in the Christian Faith, . . . in Christ Rather than Religion, . . . in a God Who Allows Suffering, . . . Christ Rose From the Dead*, etc.

⁴ *Refuting Evolution*, by Jonathan Sarfati, an excellent anti-evolution book, is available for greatly discounted rates from *Answers in Genesis* for free distribution to public high school or secular college students.

⁵ Examples include www.answersingenesis.org, www.icr.org, www.christiananswers.net.

⁶ Note Acts 17:16–34.

⁷ See John C. Whitcomb Jr., "Contemporary Apologetics and the Christian Faith," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 134 (April-June 1977), pp. 99–102, for a real-life example from the college campus.

⁸ Henry M. Morris, *Many Infallible Proofs* (El Cajon, CA: Master Books, 1974), p. 99.

⁹ See Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution 2* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2002), pp. 210–24, for more details and examples.

¹⁰ "Has the Ark of the Covenant Been Found?" *Creation ex Nihilo*, Vol. 21 (2), pp. 10–14.

Mail Bag Continued

be a consistent conclusion. If it is clearly unscriptural, then we'd best not be part of it. However, I would maintain that the lack of a clear directive on the subject leaves it in a Rom. 14 category, as a matter of conscience. . . .

Having said that, I would welcome further articles on debatable subjects such as this (even ones that may not sew up every loose end) because they can be genuinely helpful in helping believers think Biblically through the issues we all face in real life.

A Brother in Kansas

I always enjoy reading the *FrontLine* magazine and usually receive great benefit from the articles. Thank you for producing such a high quality and spiritually uplifting publication.

I would like to express some disagreement with the article in the November/December issue regard-

ing cremation. We are missionaries in Japan where few people have a choice for disposing the remains of the dead other than cremation. Should we teach the people here that cremation is really not right but we have to do it anyway? That would be very confusing and could easily lead to justification of doing other wrong things because we have no choice.

It is certainly true that cremation was and is practiced by false religions around the world. Preserving and burying the body is also practiced by many unsaved people and false religions worldwide. Actually, the cult of preservation was developed by the ancient Egyptians for totally misguided and unbiblical reasons. A case could be made from that perspective that embalming and burying the body is wrong.

I believe a better approach to the subject would be to have opinions given from both sides of the

issue. How to conduct funerals and the proper disposal of the body is not something taught in Scripture. Culture usually dictates how people dispose of dead bodies and hold funerals. Christian Americans usually think cremation is strange because they are not used to it. Japanese would generally think that burial of the body is a waste of space and unhealthy. By the way, cremated remains are also considered buried when they are placed in the tomb.

When the Bible clearly speaks, we must obey. When such is not the case, we need to acknowledge the issues involved and allow that practices different from ours may also be acceptable. That is the way God intended it to be; otherwise He would have detailed every aspect of our lives.

May the Lord bless you and give you wisdom in your vital ministry.

*John Knox
Missionary to Japan*

"I suspect that, after all, there is only one heresy. That is, the sinner's quarrel with the authority of God."
—John Duncan

"Truth must be spoken however it be taken."
—John Trapp

"When men have orthodox judgments and heterodox hearts, there must be little love to truth."
—William Gurnall

"The brain is as strong as its weakest think."
—Eleanor Doan

"As every divided kingdom falls, so every mind divided between many studies confounds and saps itself."
—Leonardo da Vinci

"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of Hell, and a hell of Heaven."
—John Milton

"Evangelicals at the moment appear to be divided into two camps—those who trust the human intellect to the point of sheer rationalism, and those who are shy of everything intellectual and are convinced that thinking is a waste of the Christian's time. Surely both are wrong."
—A. W. Tozer

"It is well to open one's mind but only as a preliminary to closing it . . . for the supreme act of judgment and selection."
—Irving Babbitt

"If you keep your mind sufficiently open, people will throw a lot of rubbish into it."
—William A. Orton

"Write down the thoughts of the moment. Those that come unsought for are commonly the most valuable."
—Francis Bacon

"There is no expedient to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labor of thinking."
—Sir Joshua Reynolds

"If the student fails to learn the teacher fails to teach."
—Anonymous

"To spend too much time in studies is sloth."
—Francis Bacon

"Reading after a certain [time] diverts the mind too much from its creative pursuits. Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking."
—Albert Einstein

"Many persons think they have open minds; actually their minds are just vacant."
—Wingspread

"The mind should be an eye to see with rather than a bin to store facts in. The man who has been taught by the Holy Spirit will be a seer rather than a scholar. The difference is that the scholar sees and the seer sees through, and that is a mighty difference indeed."
—A. W. Tozer

"The mind is the atmosphere of the soul."
—Joubert

"Drudgery is as necessary to call out the treasures of the mind as harrowing and planting those of the earth."
—G. E. News

"Little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortune, but great minds rise above it."
—Washington Irving

"I am what is called a *professor emeritus*—from the Latin *e*, 'out,' and *meritus*, 'so he ought to be.'
—Stephen Leacock

"When a man assumes a public trust, he should consider himself as public property."
—Thomas Jefferson

"If I had only three remaining years of ministry, I would spend two of them studying."
—Donald Grey Barnhouse

"The most important things in life are the thoughts you choose to frame."
—Marcus Aurelius

"What we think about when we are free to think about what we will—that is what we are or soon will become."
—A. W. Tozer



"... I've been wondering Pastor, ... how do you get down to teach the adult Sunday school class after the nine o'clock service and finish in time for the service at eleven?"

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

Do You Have Power?

Martha Mazzaferro

Early one Sunday morning as I was communing with the Lord, the phone rang. It was our oldest son who lives next door.

"Hi, Ma."

"Good morning, Tony."

"Do you have power?" I knew we did because our electric fan was cooling our house of the summer heat. I soon learned that he did not have power, but for some reason, we and his neighbor on the other side still did have power. I know now this was no mistake. God had something He wanted me to think about.

As I was later driving the thirty minutes to church, the Lord brought to mind my son's question: "Do you have power?" This time, though, it had a different meaning—a spiritual one. For weeks I could not get this thought out of my mind. Things I read and meditated upon kept bringing me back to this question.

About two months later, I awoke early, as usual, to keep my daily appointment with the Lord. The days were growing shorter, so it was still dark. While walking to my special spot, the power suddenly went out. This is not unusual, as we live in a small town that has its own independent electric power source. I knelt in prayer, thinking it would soon be back on, but it wasn't. I lit an oil lantern so I could read my Bible and write in my journal. The day had begun with no electrical power in the house. I thought about the inconvenience that can turn into hardship as I recalled those who had lost power for many days after Hurricane Floyd. Then I remembered the devastating winter storm where we lost our power for about seventy-two hours.

No power for us means no lights, no cooking facilities, and, because we have a well, no water. We do have a wood stove that heats our whole house and can be used for cooking. There is a gas grill on the outdoor deck that can be used if the storm winds are not fiercely blowing the snow and ice around. God is good. My hubby and I and our two elderly moms did manage through this power outage. We filled buckets with snow and melted it on the wood stove to have water, and I cooked on the same stove. Every room in the house has either an oil

lantern or candles so that we are always prepared.

How many of us really think about the electric power we use? We flip a switch and expect the lights to go on or the heat to rise from our stoves or furnaces. We turn on the faucet and don't even think about the water not flowing out—that is, until we lose the power. It isn't long before we realize how difficult it is to function without it. Oh, it can be done, especially at first. It may even be fun when we think it will be for only a short time. We can make a game of it; light the candles, start the fires for our food and heat, and pretend we are in the pioneer days or just camping out. But what happens as the minutes turn into hours or even days?

The fun disappears and may even turn into despair. The strong may become weak, and the weak become weaker, maybe even to the point of death if the power is not soon restored.

As I was writing this, the electricity came back on. The feeling was uplifting when the lights went on and the hum of the refrigerator began. The power is back—all is well. It reminded me of the feeling I experienced after the winter storm and hours of no power. Everyone's temperament, which had become uneasy, soon became calm. The fear disappeared. The daily routine of life is much easier to deal with when there is electric power surging through the home.

What an eye-opener this should be! All man's intellect that has given us these wonderful inventions is useless without the blessing of God!

One gust of wind, one heavy deluge of rain, one lightning strike can put out all the electric power we depend upon for our "necessities" and comforts. I love the way God speaks to us in His Word: "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures" (Jer. 51:15, 16). The next verse says, "Every man is brutish by his knowledge." "Brutish" could be "dull-hearted" or "unreceptive."

*His power is seen
in the works of
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the power to have
wealth and health.
He has power over
life and death,
both physical and
spiritual. . . .
Again the question
haunts, "Do you
have power?"*

When it comes to God and His power, this is so true.

Power belongs to God. God is all power and thus the source of all power. Jesus Christ, God's Son and one with God the Father, is power. By God's power Heaven and earth were made "and all that therein is." His power is seen in the works of His creation. He is the one who gives the power to have wealth and health. He has power over life and death, both physical and spiritual. To those who receive and believe on the name of Christ, He gives power to become His children and have eternal life with Him. With this belief and repentance comes the gift and power of the Holy Spirit. Again the question haunts, "Do you have power?"

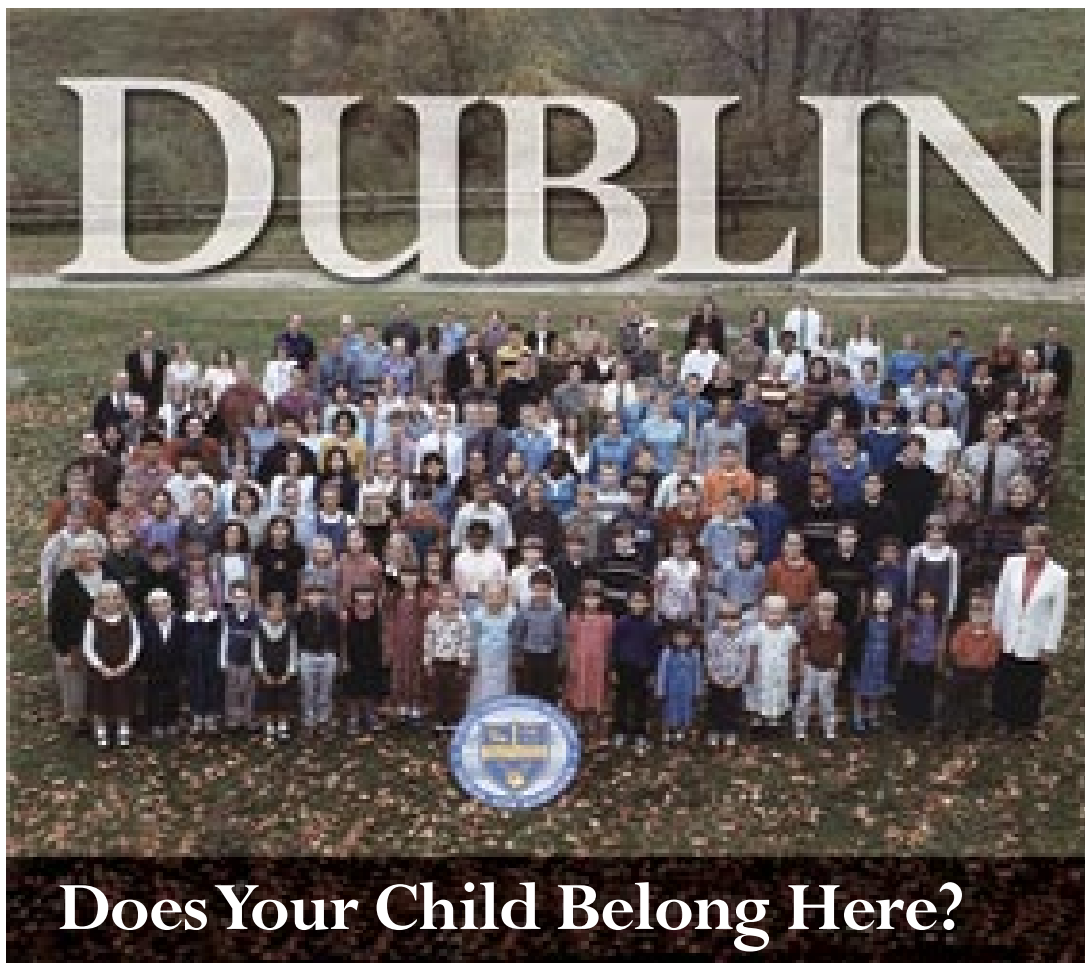
Does my day begin with the power of God? The power of the Spirit convicts us of sin so we can live the Christian life and be holy, for He is holy. It is the power of the Spirit that gives us the understanding we need as we daily read God's Word. This then enables us to die daily to self and not be conformed to the world but to have His transforming energy flow into our mind so it is daily renewed. So then, we might ask ourselves; "Why are there times I am weak and weary? Why is the lack of the power of God evident in my life? Have I quenched the Holy Spirit's power? Has there been a break in the direct line? A power outage? Has there been a gust of sin that has blown debris into the heart and broken the line? Has a deluge of worldly pleasures flooded the ear and eye gate of my soul? Has a strike of sudden disaster hit and destroyed

the faith and trust I had in my God?"

Just like losing electric power, we may be able to function for a time without the full power of God, but as the days go on we will become weaker. The "fun" of sin we thought we were having will turn into despair. The power needs to be restored. When we repent, God mends the break in the line so the power is back and all is well. Then when someone asks, "Do you have power?" we can say most assuredly, "Yes!"

In the physical world, we are told to set up a watch for an approaching storm. In the spiritual world we are told to "watch and pray." There is definitely an enemy who would seek to sabotage Christians' power in some way, but "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). To those who look for their power source from something or someone other than God, beware (2 Peter 3:17, 18)! There is a day coming that God's full power will be known and then every knee will bow before Him and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. . . . We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. . . . Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. 4:11; 11:17; 19:6).

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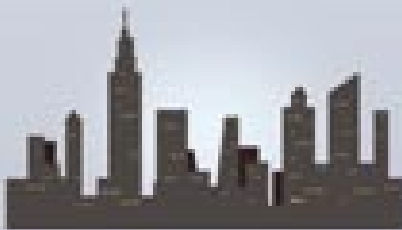
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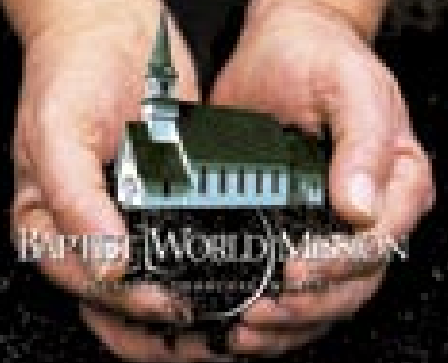


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Advertising for Evangelistic Meetings

Advertisement is a crucial matter in promoting evangelistic meetings in our local churches. We know that the business world will spend huge amounts of money for just thirty seconds of advertisement for their product. They know that in the long run it will pay for itself and be the means of sizable profits. In like fashion, we know it will cost our local churches to advertise well for a meeting. The cost of posters and cards is not cheap; paying for advertising on the radio or in the newspaper can be expensive. However, the cost will never outweigh the blessing of seeing someone saved or a Christian restored to fellowship with the Lord.

Many years ago in Fairmont, West Virginia, our church was preparing for a revival meeting with evangelist Bill Hall. Our pastor made 8½" by 11" fliers to promote the meeting. Many people in our church put them on the side windows of their cars. My cousin Forest Summers, who was instrumental in bringing me to the Lord, also placed one of these fliers on the window of his car. A young man who worked with my cousin saw the advertisement and came to the meeting. That night he accepted Christ as his Savior; he began to grow spiritually and eventually went to Bob Jones University to prepare for the ministry. He is now the pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Morgantown, West Virginia, and his name is Bennie Moran. Pastor Moran was reached for the Lord because he saw that flier for the revival meetings.

On another occasion we had a week of meetings in Michigan, and the pastor had placed an advertisement and a picture of me in the newspaper. Two ladies saw the ad, and when they saw my name they became curious about my nationality and wondered if I might be Lithuanian—which I am. These ladies came to the morning service, and as I started preaching I mentioned that I'm part Lithuanian. Both of these ladies were also Lithuanian, and their hearts became open to the preaching of the Word. They both came forward to accept Christ as their Savior! These are just a couple of examples of what can happen when we advertise for our meetings—we never know how God will use our efforts.

I'd like to give just a couple of suggestions that might be helpful in catching people's attention in advertising. Before the Lord called me to preach, I worked for a newspaper company in West Virginia; they always strove to be succinct in their columns and headings for articles. We can apply this same principle. First, give specific dates, times, and the location of the meeting. Second, give a brief statement for the purpose of the meeting. Third, try to include a short biography of the speaker. It's interesting to see the responses this will arouse.

Once I had a meeting in St. Cloud, Minnesota, with Pastor Dennis Campbell. In his advertisement in the newspaper, he included the fact that I was a converted Roman Catholic. The head nun of the convent in St. Cloud called

Pastor Campbell and told him she was upset about the ad. She then asked him if I would come to the convent and talk to the nuns about why I left the Catholic Church. Pastor relayed the message, and I agreed to talk to them. When I arrived, the head nuns and several other nuns questioned me for almost an hour. I used the Word of God to answer every question. At the close of the conversation, I asked the head nun how long she'd been there. She told me that she'd been a nun for twenty-six years. I told her I was shocked that she didn't know any more about the Bible now than she did when she first began, and that she and the rest of the nuns didn't give me one single Bible verse; all they used were the traditions of the Church. The nun bowed her head in shame and couldn't answer me. There won't always be negative responses like this one; most of them will be positive and effective in bringing people to the meetings. I personally believe that the Lord allowed that experience to occur just so I could share the Scriptures with those nuns.

I believe the best advertisements for a meeting come from the lips of church members who invite others to the services. In John 1:41, Andrew said to his brother Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Peter was brought to Christ through Andrew, whose mouth was the most effective means of advertising. When Christ talked to the Samaritan woman at the well and revealed that He was the Messiah, she went back into the city and said in John 4:29, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Many were saved because of her verbal witness for Christ.

I challenge all of us to never give up advertising, either in the newspaper or by our own lips; the Lord will use both to further His cause and save the lost!

Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.

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ANTIDOTE TO FALSE TEACHING:

The single most effective method for studying any book of the Bible is accessible to every believer. You do not need to know Hebrew or Greek, earn a seminary degree, or purchase a shelf-full of commentaries. All these are helpful, of course. No carpenter spurns tools that will make his work more efficient and more polished. But these tools are not essential to acquiring an accurate understanding of the major themes and distinctive message of the various documents that make up God's Word to us. If you are reading this paragraph, you already possess the most important hermeneutical tool you need to study any book of the Bible. The question is, how best to use it.

I am, of course, referring to the tool of reading. But not just any kind of reading. When you receive a letter from someone important to you, you probably do not read a few paragraphs and then lay it aside to finish over the next couple of days. Letters—even long ones—are read in one sitting. There is no substitute for reading the letters of the New Testament (including the longest ones) in single sittings. Several times. (In fact, there is no substitute for reading any book of the Bible in a single sitting, except perhaps Psalms.) No other study method allows you to get your mental hands on the major themes and emphases and message of any of the Scriptural writings.

Reading Letters as Letters

Versification is a mixed blessing. It allows you to locate specific passages efficiently. But it also creates a tendency to read any portion of the Bible as a collection of artificially isolated sacred sayings; it distracts from the sense of flow and context. All Bibles have verse numbers, but many now are at least printed in paragraph format (as opposed to dedicated versification, where each verse is indented as an individual unit), which is an enormous aid to contextual reading and interpretation. But thanks to personal computers and Bible programs, you can also create your own customized Bible text. If you have never made this part of your study of the NT epistles (it is workable but more unwieldy with longer books), try it. Copy the text of an epistle from a Bible program into a word processor document, eliminate all the verse numbers, run the verses end-to-end according to the punctuation, and divide the document into paragraphs—something like it might have appeared when it was composed as a letter by the original writer. Now print it out, sit down, and read it through in one sitting like you would any other letter you receive. Read it several times, like you would any other important letter that you either cherished or wanted to be sure you understood clearly.

Our focus in this column is 2 Peter, which you can read aloud (another helpful practice) and with ease in about ten

minutes. We refer to it as the "book" of 2 Peter, but Peter did not write this as a "book" of sayings subdivided into chapters and verses. He wrote it as a unified letter. As you read it that way, look for repeated words or phrases that tip you off as to the major subjects he is addressing and the most important things he is trying to emphasize. Try to identify key exhortations or warnings. Use different colored pencils or highlighters to distinguish recurring themes.

"Wait a minute," you may be tempted to think. "Isn't that being kind of overanalytical? If I am reading this as a *letter*, doesn't that imply some degree of casualness? After all, most of *my* letters are not riddled with 'key words' and 'theological themes.'" But when we write any letter of importance, we have one specific thing in mind (sometimes more than one). If the recipient's response is important to us, we weigh our words and choose our vocabulary carefully. There will usually be a strong thematic flavor not only to what we say but also to how we approach our topic and to how we express ourselves. Sometimes it even affects how we open and close the letter.

One characteristic of NT epistles is that they are *occasional*. That doesn't mean "periodic" but that they are *occasioned* by some need or event; they were not merely "casual." Paul and Peter and John didn't just "drop a note" to see how folks were doing and catch them up on the latest apostolic goings on. They wrote with specific things in mind, specific needs to be addressed, specific ends in view. And more importantly, they wrote under the directive influence of the Holy Spirit. In fact, this epistle contains one of the key NT affirmations of this doctrine of inspiration (1:19–21).

Initial Impressions of Peter's Second Letter

Having read Peter's letter at a single sitting (preferably more than once), how would you divide up the major sections of the letter? What themes or recurring words do you notice? Let's start from the end of the letter.

The Coming of the Lord. This theme is the dominant focus in chapter 3. Peter mentions it directly in 3:4, 10, and 12. But if you read carefully, you notice that everything he says in 3:1–16 revolves around this emphasis on the Lord's return: its certainty (3:4–7), its apparent delay (3:8, 9), its suddenness and inescapability (3:10), its effect on our present life (3:11–14), and its practical application to the point of his letter (3:17, 18).

False Teachers. This theme is even clearer in chapter 2. Though "false teachers" are directly mentioned only once (2:1), there are nearly thirty more pronominal references to them throughout the rest of the chapter. This is clearly the particular threat that prompted Peter to write. The

STABILITY AND GROWTH IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST (2 PETER)

introduction of chapter 1 sets the stage for this, and the focus of chapter 3 on the certainty of the Lord's return (about which some, he says, had been generating doubt) drives home the point of our ultimate accountability to Him.

Stability. Summarizing a single theme for chapter 1 is a little more difficult. Peter's concern for his readers surfaces in chapter 1 and keeps re-emerging throughout the letter. How would you sum up the essence of Peter's burden for his readers? He wants them not to *stumble* (1:10), even though they are already *established* in the truth that they have (1:12), because the *unstable* are particularly susceptible to false teaching (2:14). The *unstable* twist and misuse the Scripture (3:16); in contrast, he wants them to beware lest they fall from their own *steadfastness* (3:17). I don't think you'll find a better single summary word for Peter's burden than the word "stability." And just as with animals and plants, stability comes from *growth*—a secondary theme that surfaces regularly.

The Knowledge of Christ. Their stability is rooted in something quite specific and concrete. Peter urges his readers to be grounded in the knowledge of Christ (1:2, 3, 8). But a mere surface knowledge of Christ that is not vital and productive and life-changing is still susceptible to deception (2:20). Believers must continue to grow in their knowledge of Christ (3:18).

The Centrality of Scripture. Stability and growth in the knowledge of Christ is not a mystical experience. It has a very tangible source—the *word(s) of God*. Note the many and diverse references to the Scriptures, and its indispensability for their stability and growth in the faith (1:4, 15, 19, 20, 21; 3:1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 15, 16).

Putting It All Together

How do all these themes relate to one another? The essence of Peter's second letter can be summed up this way: *Spiritual stability, (growing in your knowledge of Christ through the Scriptures) is the antidote to the dangers of false teaching.* Peter's central concern in this letter (occupying the middle chapter) is the threat of false teaching (chapter 2). If his readers are not to "fall" for it (1:10; 2:14; 3:17), they must be stabilized in their faith. Their knowledge of Christ must not be a shallow, nominal, surface profession; it must be a living, fruit-bearing, progressively life-changing force (chapter 1). There are serious consequences for what we believe and how we live, for Jesus Christ is returning as Judge (chapter 3).

Value of Spiritual Stability: Personal Assurance (chapter 1)

- *Stability starts with apostolic faith* (1:1). This faith gives us the same acceptance and standing before God as the

apostles, because we get our faith the same way they got theirs. This faith is not attained (something we ourselves produce or acquire by our own effort) but *obtained* (granted, given by God).

- *Stability is rooted in knowledge of Christ* (1:2, 3, 5–6, 8; 2:20; 3:18). Stability does not come from how much we know, but how *well* we know *Him*. Knowledge of Christ is not mystical but practical.
- *Stability is possible because of divine power and promises* (1:2–4). God has already provided everything we need to grow in grace and escape the corrupting influences of the surrounding world. We access it through His promises.
- *Stability comes from growth in Christian graces* (1:5–11). Why? Because our growth confirms the reality of our calling and election (1:10–11; cf. 1 Thess. 1:4–7). The assurance that "you will never stumble" implies stability.
- *Stability is reinforced by constant reminding* (1:12–21). Note Peter's burden to *remind* his readers (1:12, 13, 15; 3:1, 2). Remind of what? The word of God (1:15, 19, 20). We already noted the emphasis on the importance of Scripture for spiritual stability.

Necessity of Spiritual Stability: Danger of False Teachers (chapter 2)

- Why you need to be spiritually stable: so you won't be led astray or fall away. As Peter reminded believers in his first letter, the Devil is always actively on the prowl for victims, whether through temptation or false teaching (and often the two go hand-in-hand, 2:18–20).

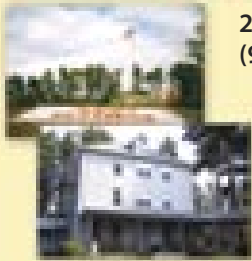
Encouragement to Spiritual Stability: The Coming Day of the Lord (chapter 3)

- *Remember our words* (3:1, 2).
- *Recognize the scoffers* (3:3–7).
- *Realize the divine perspective* (3:8–13).
- *Final call to spiritual stability* (3:14–18).

Beware . . . but Grow

In his closing words (3:17, 18), Peter succinctly sums up his double-edged message to the believer, one edge a negative warning and the other a positive exhortation: *beware . . . but grow*. Peter crams into this conclusion almost every thematic element of the epistle, confirming all our instincts about the sum and substance of this letter: *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before [knowledge of Scripture], beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked [warning of false teaching], fall from your own steadfastness [spiritual stability]; but grow in grace [exhortation to progressive growth] and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [knowledge of Christ].*

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The Twixters

Sociologists are now classifying a new group in society: "the Twixters." They view them as "betwixt" adolescence and adulthood. Estimates range from 18–25 years of age to 18–30 years of age. Formerly, the 21st birthday was viewed as the beginning of adulthood. "A recent US Gallup poll found that 90 per cent of young people report being very close to their parents, which contrasts with 40 per cent of baby boomers in 1974 who said that they would be better off without their parents. Twixters and their parents get on with each other. . . . This group can afford to take their time to grow up as they have the luxury of having relatively affluent, cashed-up parents who act as a safety net or a financial back-up in times of need. Oh, and a large number of them still live at home." (<http://ezinearticles.com/?Meet-The-Twixters!&id=12990>) A *Time* magazine poll of 106 adults, ages 18–29, found that only 61% of respondents considered themselves adults for varying reasons. "Adulthood" was defined as

- "Having first child"—22%
- "Moving out of parents' home"—22%
- "Getting a good job with benefits"—19%
- "Getting married"—14%
- "Finishing school"—10%

(<http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101050124/graphic/index.html>, accessed 2/9/05)

High-Risk Drinking

"The average age that students have their first drink of alcohol is 12 or 13 now," said Brandon Basteed, founder and CEO of Outside the Classroom, which offers an online alcohol education course that UConn and many other colleges are requiring students to take. "Thirty percent of high school students describe themselves as binge drinkers. By the end of the first semester in college, the number spikes to 60 percent," Basteed said. Experts say that alcohol consumption has not changed among college students in the last few years, but what has changed is high-risk drinking.

"Alcohol is being more linked to competition. They are not just drinking to be with friends and to socialize. They are drinking to see how far they can push it," Basteed said.

"Tom Szigethy, UConn's new substance abuse director, agreed that competition and a desire to push drinking to the extreme are behind the trend. "There definitely is a level of extremism, like extreme sports and all the other extreme stuff you see. Everything is living on the edge," he said. "The attitude among people in that age group is that if such and such drank to this level and had a good time, then I'm going to drink even

more and have an even better time.'" (Hartford *Courant*, 10–10–2004)

Binge Drinking on Campus

"Nationally, 44 percent of college students report binge drinking—five drinks in a row for men, four for women—at least once in the previous two weeks. Half of those students do it more than once a week. While the percentage of binge drinkers has stayed about the same over the past 11 years, the amount they drink in one sitting has increased. . . . Members of fraternities and sororities tend to drink more than other students. Nationally, there are more than 1,400 alcohol-related deaths among college students each year, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Most die in traffic accidents.

(<http://www.journalstar.com/articles/2004/11/29/local/doc41aa8de30713f284825611.txt>, accessed 12/18/04)

Suicides on Campus

"Suicide, the second leading cause of death among college students according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, ranked only behind accidents. In the last 25 years, the suicide rate among 15- to 24-year-olds has nearly tripled, averaging one suicide every two hours and eleven minutes as indicated by the National

Vital Statistics Reports of 2002. The American College Health Association surveyed 16,000 college students from 28 campuses in 2000. Results showed that 9.5 percent of students had seriously contemplated suicide, while 1.5 percent had actually made a suicide attempt. In the one year period of the survey, more than half reported feeling very sad, over a third reported feeling hopeless and 22 percent reported feeling so depressed they were not able to function. However, only 6.2 percent of males and 12.8 percent of females surveyed reported a diagnosis of depression, leaving a large number of students without treatment or diagnosis." (<http://www.ksusentinel.com/news/2005/02/09/News/College.Suicides.Escalate.In.Numbers-857535.shtml>, accessed 2/9/05)

Mixed Message

Rolling Stone magazine has accepted an ad for Zondervan's new Bible translation entitled *Today's New International Version*. The ad, which was originally rejected by the magazine, is apparently aimed at young people. (http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050127/news_1c27relbrief.html, accessed 1/30/2005)

Saving the Planet, Not Souls?

"The preachers in England have fallen on hard times since they pretty

much turned Jesus out of the church, but the archbishop of Canterbury has come up with a novel idea to make himself relevant: If you can't get 'em to church, get 'em to the greenhouse. The churches of England—the churches of the Church of England—are going eco-friendly. Dr. Rowan Williams wants his vicars to serve only organic bread and wine for holy communion, to urge parishioners to ride to service in car pools, recycle 'waste products,' and to sell only 'fair trade products' at church fairs and Bingo suppers. Anglicans should consider the ethics of the High Streets and shopping malls. If he can't save the world, the well-meaning archbishop has set out to save the planet, one weed at a time."

(<http://washingtontimes.com/national/20050204-121603-5206r.htm>, accessed 2/9/05)

Care for Creation

Over 1000 religious leaders from 35 states have signed a statement entitled "God's Mandate: Care for Creation." "The statement objects to Bush's policies on global warming, toxic emissions from coal-fired power plants and lack of emphasis on conservation. The National Council of Churches is circulating the statement to 250,000 clergy and lay leaders across the country." (washingtonpost.com, *God's Mandate: Putting the White House on Notice*, 2/6/2005)

American Idol Worship Leader

The Southern Baptist Convention news site (bpnews.net) reports that one of its "worship leaders," Jeff Johnson, is still in the running in the highly publicized *American Idol* competition. Johnson reports, "Back in

NOTABLE QUOTES

Nationwide, suicide is the second leading killer of college students. —nami.org

A 10,000-student campus can expect one student suicide a year. That doesn't count all the highly disturbing attempts. —Hara Estroff Marano, "Crisis on Campus," <http://cms.psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20030501-000005.html>

To seek tranquility by stopping our ears to the cries of human pain is to make ourselves not Christian but a kind of degenerate stoic having no relation either to stoicism or Christianity. —A.W. Tozer, *The Next Chapter after the Last*

If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works? —Proverbs 24:11, 12

The environment is a values issue. . . . There are significant and compelling theological reasons why it should be a banner issue for the Christian right. —Rev. Ted Haggard, president of the 30 million-member National Association of Evangelicals, quoted in the *Washington Post*, February 6, 2005, p. A01

We Christians have never been the whole bolt of cloth—always just a remnant. We have never been the loaf of bread—only the leaven. We have never been the side of meat—only the salt. But as leaven lifts the loaf and as salt preserves the meat so the Christian community has before it the challenge to influence the degenerate society in which it exists. —Grantland Rice

The ideal environment does not guarantee perfect performance. Remember, Adam was in paradise when he fell. —Vance Havner

The first duty of the church is not to evangelize but to get ready to evangelize. —Vance Havner

Dost thou see a soul with the image of God in him? Love him, love him. Say to thyself, "This man and I must go to heaven together someday."—John Bunyan

September, I auditioned in New Orleans with around 8000 other people. At first, I just thought it would be fun to be part of the craziness of auditioning for the show. But, four auditions later, the judges said, 'Yes, you're going to Hollywood!' for five days of taping last November." The article by Leann Callaway insists that "Johnson's faith was evident during the show's Jan. 25 episode, when he was shown praying with a group of contestants and, in a voice-over, told of his ministry as a worship leader and said he hopes to use his *American Idol* experience to share his faith." (<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=20082>, accessed 2/9/2005)

PA Hate Crimes Law

Opponents of Act 143 of the Pennsylvania Hate Crimes Law passed in November 2002 denounced the inclusion of "sexual orientation protection" in the law. They pointed out that the law could be used to deprive Christians of the right to free speech. This criticism was largely ignored by Pennsylvania legislators until a pro-homosexual event in October of 2004. There, outspoken Christians were charged with "ethnic intimidation" under the law. Now 17 legislators have co-sponsored House Bill 204 which would remove the wording included in November 2002. Five of the Christians arrested at the event are facing decades of imprisonment and heavy fines because the city prosecutor maintains that the bull-horn used was "an instrument of crime." (<http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/2/72005b.asp>, accessed 2/9/2005)

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship.

Your Church and Student Mission Trips

Pearson Johnson

College students frequently ask us what we recommend they do in the summers. Of course, we recommend that students consider taking at least one summer during their college years to participate in a cross-cultural mission trip. Mission trips never fail to be eye-opening and life changing experiences for those who go. Trips can be organized through a board, a school, or with an individual missionary. Regardless of who organizes and promotes the trips, however, we must encourage students to connect with their local church before leaving, while on the field, and upon returning from the trip. In this issue focusing on college ministry, we want to encourage college students and churches to purposefully partner together in their missions experiences so that students are launched effectively from their local churches into the regions beyond. A college student mission trip can be a life-changing experience not only for the student but for the entire church. Here are six specific launch points to keep in mind when preparing for a mission trip.

Launch Point 1: Go Local before Going Global. Students should develop habits of service through their local church at home first, before they hit the field. Conversely, churches should purposefully provide opportunities for their students to get involved in the church and exercise their gifts at home. The priorities of evangelism and discipleship are molded in your culture before they are transferred to another culture. While serving in your church, the church people and pastors can observe and evaluate your giftedness and thus give counsel for improvement. Only then can they launch you with confidence.

Launch Point 2: Get to Know Your Co-Laborers. Paul makes it clear in Romans 15 that those who sent him were co-laborers, striving together with him in the cause of the gospel. Do not assume that because you are from a church, people will pray for you. Get to know them while serving. Ask them to pray for you. Tell them you depend upon their prayers, and spend time praying with them as you prepare to launch.

Launch Point 3: Inform Your Pastor. Students who are considering mission trips should do so with the counsel of their pastor. Get his advice and support. Call him from school. When you are home, ask for a meeting with your pastor and tell him what you plan to do, provided your church supports you. Perhaps he knows of missionaries who could really use your help. Do not let your letter asking for money be the first communication with your pastor and church!

Launch Point 4: Communicate, Communicate, Communicate. Those who inform their local church of their progress and experience regularly are those who will be prayed for most. Bother people so that they pray for you. Most people want to be kept up-to-date. If you believe in the power of prayer, communication is vital. Keep your church in the know so you can be effective when you go.

Launch Point 5: Reciprocate. A missionary recently sent a card asking for requests from our church so his family could pray for us. We were thrilled to know that while we were laboring in prayer for him in Southeast Asia, he was striving with us in Allen Park, Michigan. With e-mail you can gather requests from individuals and encourage them by praying for them. Relationships are greatly strengthened by reciprocal prayer.

Launch Point 6: Report Back after the Trip. When you return from the trip, ask your pastor for the opportunity to report to your church. God will be glorified when you report and the people of your church praise Him together with you for what was accomplished. Your report can be used of God to mobilize others for future trips as well.

Mission trips, if launched correctly, provide opportunities for both individuals and churches to grow. Students who go on their own will miss the resources available from their church through prayer, and churches who let them go without being connected will miss out on many opportunities to praise God. This summer, let's focus on launching students from our local churches!

A college student mission trip can be a life-changing experience not only for the student but for the entire church.

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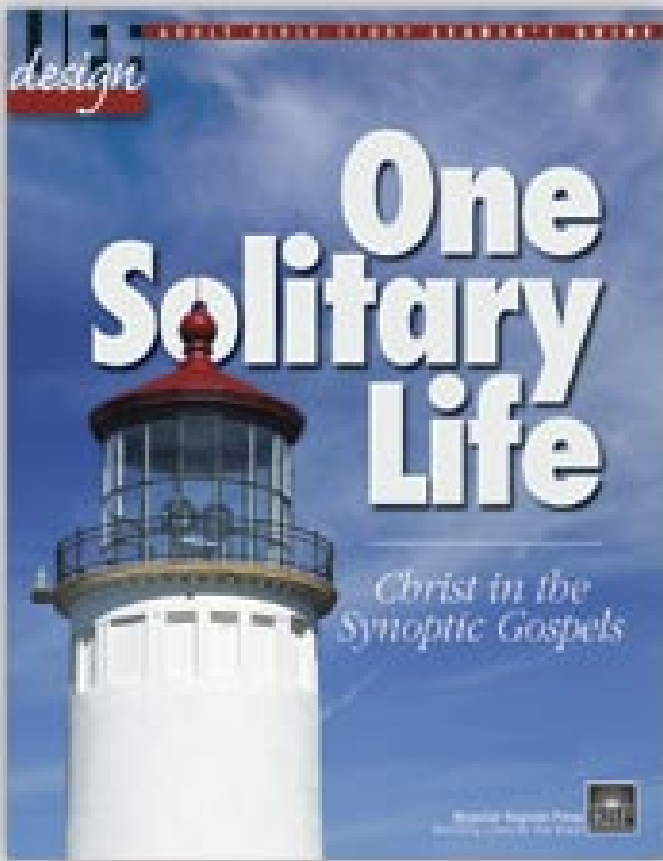
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Campus Ministry—What's the Big Deal?

This issue of *FrontLine* is focused on the need for campus ministries. Perhaps you have scanned the articles and asked, "What's the big deal?" I would like to share a partial and personal answer to that question.

When I close my eyes, I can still see my parents standing outside of our home in West Virginia waving good-bye. I was seventeen years old. I was looking out of the back window of my friend's car through tear-filled eyes and doing my best to "be a man" as we left for college. It would be four long months before I would be back in the hills with Dad and Mom. That was nearly thirty years ago, but the memory of that emotion-filled day has never left me. The fear of the unknown and my dreams of the future were suddenly and indescribably combined with the pain of parting. This experience is common to all those who "go off" to college. Leaving home for the first time is an earth-shaking experience for most, and those who know God's Word know that earthquakes open hearts (see Acts 16).

Studies indicate that adolescence is a time of keen spiritual interest and unparalleled spiritual openness. Evangelist Tom Rees of England conducted an extensive study that indicated that 75% of those attending his meetings came to Christ before the age of fourteen, 20% between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, and only 5% after the age of twenty-one. Lionel Hunt came to a similar conclusion, noting that 85% of Americans are converted between the ages of four and fifteen, 10% between the ages of fifteen and thirty, and only 4% after the age of thirty.* Groups like Inter-Varsity, the Navigators, and Campus Crusade

have long understood the opportunity available to those who would seek to reach the college campuses. Just as wise farmers learn to plant during times of optimum opportunity, we too must prayerfully consider that the college campus is a ready-plowed field awaiting the life-giving seed (Matt. 13).

We send missionaries to remote areas of the globe to "tell the sweet story of Christ and His love." All the while we are sending out our missionaries, other nations are sending their best to study in our universities. I am not denigrating the need to go to lands far off. I am, however, recommending that we give consideration to those who are coming to us. Foreign nationals are often open to more than the facts that may be found in our schools. They are often open to finding faith in our Savior.

College is a time when critical decisions are made. College students meet lifelong friends, make career choices, and often find their life's mate. Let's not forget that while sitting in class their eager minds are often being "[spoiled] through philosophy and vain deceit" (Col. 2:8). Patterns of thought discovered in college will lead to patterns of life developed in careers. We who love the Lord must consider the importance of countering the traditions of the world with the truths of God's Word before the student becomes the teacher (John 17:17; Rom. 10:14, 15).

News reports of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning among college students often cause us to shudder with amazement. Immorality among co-eds is an ever-increasing problem in an age of casual relationships

without moral absolutes. Is there any hope? Psalm 119:9-11 reminds us that the ways of the young are cleansed by "taking heed" to the Word of God! We dare not stand idly by, expecting the youth of America to be set on the right path through the influence of peers or academia. College students need exposure to God's Word to keep them from the pollution of this age.

Last spring our eldest daughter finished her undergraduate program and began to seek admission in graduate school. After seventeen consecutive years of study in Christian schools, our "little girl" would soon be renting an apartment and taking graduate classes on a secular campus. Suddenly the need for college ministries became very real to our family. As we prayed and planned with our daughter, we considered first the Christian community in which she would be grounded while attending a secular school and then the catalog offerings of the school. We have been very pleased by our daughter's excellent grades during her studies these past several months, but our joy in her academic performance is inconsequential as it compares to the joy we have experienced as she has told us of her local church attendance, those to whom she has witnessed, and the Christian friends that she is making through her on-campus Bible studies.

If you ask me, campus ministry is a "big deal"!

Chuck Phelps pastors Trinity Baptist Church in Concord, New Hampshire.

*Irving and Zuck, *Youth and the Church*, Chicago: Moody Press, p. 14.



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FrontLine Magazine

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Taylors, SC 29687
*A publication of the Fundamental Baptist
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