

Why Campus Ministry?

<http://joinus.campuscrusadeforchrist.com>

There are many wonderful missions organizations and ministries focused on everything from prisons, to the inner city, to providing shelter for the homeless. Being on staff with Campus Crusade, your ministry will be focused on reaching college students with the gospel.

This focus, this ministry, has a unique history. What you'll find here is what makes the campus ministry so strategic to the fulfillment of the great commission. These are the "why's" behind the mission to reach 60 million college students with the gospel.

The Point of Decision

It's March 1991 and a Finnish student at the University of Helsinki, looks like he hasn't slept in months. He hasn't. Night and day for six months he's been designing a new operating system that, unlike Windows, never crashes. He has now reached a point of decision: who to sell his system to? Only he doesn't make that choice at all, instead Linus Torvalds chooses to give his creation away, and in the same moment revolutionizes not only the field of technology, but economics as well.

Between the years of enrollment and graduation, students (as you well know) will wrestle with every decision imaginable and, for bad or good, come to decisions. The choices they make will shape not only their lives but the world we live in, for the decisions made in these 4 years set the trajectory for the next 60.

Decisions about lifestyles: to drink? to have sex? to abstain? to binge-purge? indulge? experiment?

Decisions about career: selecting majors - changing majors, graduate school, internships, choosing employers, locating in cities. Decisions about God: to believe, doubt, investigate, ridicule. Decisions about relationships: boyfriends, girlfriends, same sex - different sex, parents, marriage, living together, sex, pregnancy, and abortion. This for example, is right off an Internet message board:

"I was one of those women who said, 'well, I would never have an abortion.' Well, here I sit having had not one but two abortions. And yes, after my first one, I said I would NEVER, EVER do it again. But, I did. And, I stand by the fact that I made the right decision for myself BOTH times."

Most students have to navigate these decisions without any spiritual direction or encouragement. The campus ministry targets college students, because it is the decision making time of life: the small window of time where individuals are open to changing their ideas, beliefs and perceptions of the world. This is why roughly 90% of all Christians made their decision for Christ before they reached the age of 21.

A People of Influence

Having received a fellowship to Magdalen College at Oxford, this young atheist quietly wrestled with the meaning of life. As he would state in his journal:

"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

In his days on campus he made significant relationships with Christians who indelibly influenced his life and thought. Writing in a letter to a close friend he remarked, "had a long satisfying talk" with two Christian friends "I learned a lot." The spiritual journey continued for several years until C.S. Lewis, with the help of his two friends (Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien), would finally mark his conversion. "In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed... The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation."

Lewis would go on to write more than 30 books, and become one of the most influential Christians of the century, touching millions through his writings.

Did you ever consider that the student sitting across from you may be the next C.S Lewis, Colin Powell, or Bill Gates. The guy on the wrestling team could be the next Mother Teresa. OK, bad example, but you see the point. On the campus today is the next generation of social, religious, corporate, and political leaders of this country, as well as the world. Right now there's a future president, somewhere, sitting down to a plate of dining hall food.

2 Corinthians 4:4 states, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

In October of 1835 Karl Marx shows up at Bonn University, joins the "Young Hegelian" club, sheds his Christian training, becomes an atheist, and embraces communism. The campus is a battleground of ideas and ideologies, vying for dominance and competing for followers. Everyone will graduate as believers, but in what?

It isn't a question whether tomorrow's leaders are on the campus, or even a question whether these leaders will shape and influence our country and world. The question is who will shape and influence them? The old watchword of Campus Crusade for Christ was, "win the campus today and you'll win the world tomorrow." Almost every major political, athletic, social, military and religious leader will pass through the university. To reach them with the gospel is to effectively reach the world.

A Place of Destiny

"There has been at times a deep and solemn thoughtfulness among the students at the State University ...under the influence of the Holy Spirit...banishing the last remains of skepticism."

(1850's revival at the University of Michigan)-New York Herald

"Tuesday April 20: Being some rain in the fore part of the day, we could not meet in the woods for prayer so we met in Phi Gamma Hall, and in a few minutes there were six or eight converted and we went to the church where there were several more converted before we left."

1858 student diary, Church College

"A number of our choices young people felt that God was calling them to missionary work...so great was the power of God. The meeting continued to well after midnight and a number were saved."

The History of Seattle Pacific College - In 1886 the first ever Christian conference for College Students was held at Mount Hermon, Massachusetts. On Friday evening, the last day of the conference, 250 students were given a challenge by Robert Wilder to consider taking the gospel to the world as foreign missionaries. One by one, coming forward to except the challenge, were 100 students from schools such as Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, and Cornell. As a symbol of their commitment, each student signed a pledge, which simply read:

“We the undersigned, declare ourselves willing and desirous, God permitting, to go to the unevangelized portions of the world.”

Seeing God’s hand at work, Wilder spent the next year feverishly traveling to over a hundred and fifty campuses giving the same challenge, and seeing an additional 2,100 sign the Pledge. And this, quite literally, was only the beginning; for over 50 years missionaries would pour out from the Student Volunteer Movement to the far corners of the earth—a total of 20,500 missionaries, the greatest missionary endeavor in the history of the church.

In 1948, The Student Volunteer Movement splintered, its evangelistic core feeling increasingly unwelcome joined with a newly formed college ministry and held their first missions conference in Urbana, Illinois. The group is known as InterVarsity and was soon joined by Campus Crusade for Christ and other campus ministries: a whole new missionary enterprise once again springing from the campus and flowing out to the world.

But the history of God using college students and the University goes back much further, threading through the great spiritual revivals of the nineteenth and eighteenth century, and back to the Protestant Reformation which was launched at the University of Wittenberg and nurtured on the campuses of Paris, Toulouse, and Basel.

The fact is, no one thought up the strategy of fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching the college campus. Campus ministry is the result of the observation that God has chosen to use University and college students like you as His primary vehicle in accelerating the evangelism of the world. The campus ministry is the heart of God’s global missionary strategy.

A Time of Calling

Pastors serving Christ under communism, church planters in south America, evangelists in Asia, missionaries to the Muslim world: trace back the spiritual journey of today’s great Christian servants and you’ll find that many of them came from the campus ministry. They were involved in a campus movement just like the one you’re in (perhaps from your campus), which led them to a vocational choice of full-time ministry.

Which leads to an important question: from where will the next generation of Christian workers, pastors and missionaries come? From the college ministries around the world of Campus Crusade for Christ and other evangelical groups. From these campuses will come the generation of laborers who will see the great Commission fulfilled.

For this reason the role of Campus Staff in raising up Christian workers is arguably the most influential in all of Christian ministry. In fact many Crusade staff desiring to serve internationally have remained on U.S. campuses knowing that every year they remain they will multiply themselves many times over in laborers for the harvest. The average Campus Director could point on a map to dozens, sometimes hundreds, of locations where laborers have gone out from their ministry and are now serving.

The campus ministry also holds the keys to laborers in another way. Being a university student is simply one of the most unique situations in your lifetime. Few jobs would ever allow you to spend four months of each year doing anything you want. This result is a potential army of part-time missionaries.

There are nations of the world that are closed to Christianity and missionaries, but they are not closed to students. The fact is university students have been able, over their summers, to take the message of Christ where the gospel has never traveled before.

The campus ministry has and continues to hold the answer to Jesus' prayer that God would "send out workers into his harvest field." To be involved in campus ministry is more than reaching the next generation for Christ, it's about raising up the next generation of Christian laborers who will lead the church and complete the Great Commission.

A Voice of Change

In a recent book (*The Tipping Point*) that analyzes the way ideas and communications spread, Malcolm Gladwell gives the following example:

In 1994 the brand known as Hush Puppies were selling at the dismal rate of 30,000 shoes a year. Wolverine, mother company of Hush Puppies, was in the process of eliminating the shoe that had made them famous—perhaps a decision that would have been applauded by many. Then something very strange happened in Manhattan. In a few Soho nightclubs, college age trendsetters began wearing Hush Puppies because, well, just... because.

Within months parties all over Manhattan were sporting them—like a virus the Hush Puppy "buzz" was spreading everywhere. In the fall of 1995 designer John Bartlett called Hush Puppies wanting to use them in his Spring Collection. Then Manhattan designer Anna Sui called wanting them for her fashion show as well, and the next thing you know Pee Wee Herman is wearing them in a movie. By 1995 the Hush puppy virus had turned into an international plague; the company sold 430,000 pairs and the following year nearly 2 million. And, get this, in 1996 Hush Puppies won the prize for the best accessory at the Council of Fashion Designer Awards, the president of Hush Puppies sharing the same stage with Calvin Klein and Donna Karan to accept the award.

Gladwell asks and answers the question "how did this happen?" The answer is ideas spread with the same dynamics of a virus. And college age students are the ideal "carriers," able to turn a simple "outbreak" into a global epidemic. But it's not just fashion; a simple survey of some of the most significant trends and shifts in the realm of ideas, art, music, politics (the 60's for example), or religion seem to point back to handful of college students who were able to take an idea and spread it globally. Perhaps it's the age, perhaps it's the zeal or network of relationships but whatever it is, college students are the ideal carriers of a message. We focus on the college campus and college students because we believe the result could be the epidemic spread of the gospel around the world.

Discussion Questions

1. What were your favorite parts of the article?
2. What would excite you about pouring your life into college students? What would be potential hardships and drawbacks?
3. Have you fully surrendered your post-graduation plans to the Lord? Discuss.
4. Between STINT, Internship and Fulltime staff which options are you currently praying about (if any)?