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THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE AND THE SECULAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT

BY DENNIS GAYLOR

What college should I attend? In America, this is one of life's most important questions. It profoundly impacts the trajectory of a young adult's calling and career, academic success, and spiritual development. Parents are actively engaged in this decision-making process. Church leaders realize each collegiate generation indisputably affects the future direction of society and the Church.

As a young church movement, the Assemblies of God (AG) recognized the importance of education. The 3-year Bible institute emerged as a mainstay in the (AG). These schools provided the early context for ministerial training and included compulsory attendance at daily chapel, quiet hour twice a day, a noon missionary prayer, weekly missionary meetings, and a prayer in each class. Astonishingly, twelve Bible schools opened between 1917 and 1938 alone. Presently, we have 19 endorsed AG schools with a combined enrollment of 16,695 students (Fall 2007).¹

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DIRECTOR'S DESK



WHERE IS THE SEAT OF POWER?

Can it be found at the helm of our Fortune 500 companies? After all, in these boardrooms, our interest rates are set, our markets are regulated, and our economy is formed.

Is it on the set of our latest blockbuster? After all, this is where our cultural trends are launched and our latest movie stars are born.

Maybe it is in the judge's chambers, or on the floor of our legislative houses, or perhaps behind the desk in the Oval Office? After all, this is where we litigate our conflicts, make the laws of our land, and govern our nation.

What if there is another seat of power—one that is not apparent at first glance? What if our businesses, media outlets, and government institutions are not the most powerful place of influence?

The vast majority of future leaders form their worldview and build their life dreams while studying on college campuses. For that reason, the simple chair behind a student's desk just might be the most powerful seat on earth.

The university has strategic impact on every major institution. How do we best proceed in reaching college students from the most powerful seat on earth?

College Ministries must be viewed through the eyes of missions (see "Missiology of Chi Alpha," pages 4-5). It is not Christian Education or Youth Ministry, and often College Ministries function differently than College and Career Ministry or Young Adult Ministry.

Benson Hines suggests, "College ministry describes ministry to people whose lifestyle, state of transition, focus on community, and age are generally 'collegiate.' While these lines can be blurry and individual audiences may vary, my belief is that these four factors separate this life stage from youth ministry and young adult stages."

To be effective in reaching college students, employing the methodologies and strategies used in missions is paramount. The contextual and cultural differences should always affect how we present Christ and seek to establish ministry. Because we believe colleges and universities are strategic for advancing the gospel, we work to establish lasting, influential "campus communities of faith" to permanently serve these mission fields.

Maybe a simple chair (at a desk, in a dorm or apartment, on any college campus) is the real seat of power!

Dennis Gaylor is national director of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA.

Check out the Seat of Power DVD - on the back cover. Chi Alpha will send you a free copy.

THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE AND



THE SECULAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT

In 1947, thirty-three years after this young church movement began, a twenty-something, J. Robert Ashcroft, proposed that we begin a ministry to our college youth not attending our AG colleges. By 1953, another twenty-something and a secular college graduate, J. Calvin Holsinger, established the first Pentecostal campus group on a state college and began using the name Chi Alpha. Today Chi Alpha is organized on 250 campuses involving 20,000 students nationwide.

Where are our youth going after high school? According to our General Superintendent, Dr. George O. Wood, approximately 60,000 AG youth graduate from high school each year.² About 3,000 (5%) of them will attend one of our 19 schools, while 37,500 (62%) will go to a secular university, and 19,800 (33%) will not attend college.

These numbers reveal that a large proportion of our AG youth will attend a secular university each year, and our annual church survey (2007)³, reported that 74% of our AG college students currently attend a secular university.

Because Chi Alpha is active on less than 10% of the nation's secular and non-religious private school campuses, more than 90% of our nation's campuses have no Pentecostal Christian witness. This represents millions of students. One-third of our nation's campuses have no Christian presence or witness whatsoever.⁴ Most college students today do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, never attend church, and in the four years they attend college, will never have someone share the gospel with them. Chi Alpha exists to serve our AG students and to reach the lost.

60,000 AG youth graduate from high school each year. About 3,000 (5%) of them will attend one of our 19 schools.

Yes, emphatically, we need more called and qualified ministers and missionaries and more students to enroll in our AG colleges to prepare for ministry and for others to bring their Christian life and witness to bear on all of life. We also need to resource and invest in our AG students going to the secular campus and to stand with these students in Chi Alpha who are bringing the good news into the university contexts.

A credit card company ran several TV ads, highlighting what things cost and ended with an experience that was priceless, saying, "There are some things money can't buy, for everything else there's credit and debit Master Card." We cannot put a price on educating and equipping our college youth. It is wise stewardship to invest in our AG students attending our schools. It is also wisdom to protect the investment our parents, youth leaders, and pastors have made in our youth that go away to a secular college or university by investing in Chi Alpha.

For many of our AG students, an experience at one of our schools is preferred. We understand not all students are made the same, and some are better served with this choice. A Bible college or Christian university provides valuable, biblically-based training, learning and living with a Christian worldview, chapel services, and interaction with Christian teachers and Christian students.

Other students face the challenges of a secular campus. For some, their educational preparation is better served with a particular school that excels in their field of study. Active involvement in a Christian student organization will develop them spiritually, provide Christian

MISSIOLOGY OF CHI ALPHA

BY GLEN DAVIS AND
JERRY GIBSON

Many Christians today think of missions as something that only ever happens in other languages on other continents. That's clearly the bulk of missions: 95 percent of the world lives outside the United States. Yet, that's not all of missions.

What is Mission? Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost," and "I will build my church." At the conclusion of His earthly mission, He instructed His followers to continue His work to "go and make disciples of all nations, teaching to obey all I have commanded you." The core work of missions is the establishment of communities of believers which exist to further Christ's redemptive purpose on earth. Is our mission to win converts? It is more than evangelism. We are to establish communities of believers.

Self-Governing, Self-Funding and Self-Perpetuating Communities

The only real model in Scripture of what this mission looks like is given to us through Luke's narrative in the Book of Acts. This chronicles the birth, development, and expansion of Christ's ongoing mission. The primary activities of those early missionaries (Paul and his missionary band) have provided the foundation for understanding how we are to establish those communities of believers as self-governing, self-funding, and self-perpetuating communities.

A church engages in missions whenever it expands the kingdom without deriving new members for itself. In other words, missions is the church reaching beyond itself. As with the apostle Paul, this typically takes the form of the church sending missionaries (teams or individuals) from one geographical area, establishing self-governing, self-funding, and self-perpetuating communities of believers in another area. Thus, church planting in America and overseas are both missionary activities.

However, we must not limit our understanding of "Church." There is another expression of this missionary activity. There are some contexts

demanding ministry where self-governing, self-funding, and self-perpetuating churches take on a different look.

How does this indigenous principle work in the context of the college and university campus?

Many campuses are self-sufficient communities with their own apartments, restaurants, police departments, fire departments, and post offices. In fact, on many campuses, freshmen are not allowed to own vehicles. It's possible to go weeks without ever setting foot off campus. These are also very transient communities shifting dramatically every school year and completely every four to five years. Thus, campuses are their own communities needing their own witness.

So the planting of Christian communities on the campus must take on a different model. In fact, to force a "traditional" church model would be illegal at Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale, MIT, USC, and most of America's best-known colleges. Planting traditional churches next to the campus is sometimes possible, but not always.

But we cannot simply throw up our hands and let the campuses go their merry way. Universities are the steering wheels of societies: As goes the campus, so goes the culture. By ministering at an established educational center, Paul was able to influence the entire province of Asia.

[Paul] took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:9-10, NIV).

Thus it is vital that we touch universities in order to touch the world.

And so we must establish ministries (other communities) on university campuses, which can reach the students there.

Can they be self-governing?

Yes, but not in the same sense as a traditional church. Student-led groups without ongoing guidance have demonstrated a predictable cycle: rapid



expansion, short stability, rapid collapse. There are exceptions, but this is the dominant trend. The rapid turnover of leadership proves to be too difficult for the organization to weather without an external source of stability. In addition, college students are still young and prone to make very simple mistakes in leadership. Thus, they need external leaders to come in and coach them.

And at the same time responsibility for self-direction must be part of the ongoing work of the campus missionary, laying real responsibility for the development of the ministry and self-determination squarely in the hands of student leaders.

Can they be self-funding?

Yes, but not in the same sense as a traditional church. Few students have full-time jobs, almost all are making minimum wage, and almost all of their income goes to support their education. Exacerbating the problem, universities (especially the elite ones) tend to be in high cost-of-living areas. Thus, supporting a full-time minister is beyond the scope of almost all student ministries. And at some universities, it is illegal to receive offerings. Generally, a student ministry can fund its program costs through offerings.

Here they accept responsibility of God's work locally and the expansion of His mission. As in the case of Paul the apostle, those who minister to them must have an external source of funding.

Can they be self-perpetuating?

Yes, but not in the same sense as a traditional church. Universities are "sticky." That is to say, a student team from UC Berkeley typically can't pick up and transplant themselves to UT Austin. Admissions, scholarships, and credits make transferring difficult. So while students can evangelize other students on their own campus, they have a limited ability to evangelize students on other campuses. Thus, there must be some external organization coordinating ministry to all the colleges and universities across America. They do, however, have the responsibility as "owners" of the ministry to be part of the multiplication of min-

istry to the generations of students who will come behind them. In Acts, the missionary team would make converts, establish communities, set things in order, and move on. University communities are moving targets. The mission field moves on while the missionary stays local. Thus, the primary work of the campus missionary is to assist those who minister on campus to reproduce themselves before transitioning on to the work world.

And so we see that while university ministry requires missionary outreach, the biblical model of missionary activity is different than the traditional Assemblies of God paradigm.

Conclusion

- Jesus ministered within the culture in which He was raised because He was called to have a unique strategic impact. By touching Israel, He would touch the world.
- Paul also stayed within his own nation. He traveled from strategic center to strategic center, realizing that from such places, the gospel would ring out like a bell to the surrounding countryside (1 Thessalonians 1:8).
- The campus is a transient field. While the field moves, the missionary stays stationary.
- The Chi Alpha missionary has a responsibility to the Church. They do not have an option of working together or not. Both should establish and release new ministries to be carried on by the community so that the ministries can endure beyond their tenure.



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THE SECULAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3 >

relationships, and prepare them for leadership in the Church and society.

A serious and growing concern, however, is that many of our youth leave the church. Do we blame the secular university? In a *Christianity Today* article, “Why College Doesn’t Turn Kids Secular”⁵ the article states, “Most of the seeds for ‘secularization’ are planted well before college, but it is during college that the diminished participation in organized religion emerges and becomes evident.” Thom Rainer found that “there is no significant difference between the church dropout rates of those who attend at least a year of Christian, private, or state college.”⁶ Josh McDowell in *The Last Christian Generation*, said, “the difference between the attitudes and actions of professing Christian youth and non-Christian youth is no more than four percent.”⁷

Realistically, many of our youth have already checked out by high school years and are ill prepared for the transition from family and high school to college. The AG cannot afford to single out youth ministry, Chi Alpha, parents, church, or the secular university. We need to understand all these entities are significant in the preparation of youth for transition and for lifelong learning and living.

A Bible college or Christian university may well be the best choice for our youth that have not solidified their faith and practice or who are eager to serve Christ in a Christian vocation. A secular campus may be right for others if they have a vigorous Christian faith that will help them thrive in the context of many challenges.

Bill Clem in “Transitioning Seniors into College”⁸ said, “The most vulnerable Christian freshmen on a secular campus are the ones who know a little about faith but have never made following Christ the focal point of their lives. If teenagers haven’t started down the ‘narrow road’ by the time they’re seniors in high school, the price for following Christ will likely feel too high on a campus rife with com-

peting belief systems, ramped-up temptations, and radically new peer groups.”

Joe Zickafoose, a former AG world missionary, church planter, and Chi Alpha director, said, “Students I have seen who come through the fire of a secular campus and stand firm are the people who go overseas, who become activists in the church. Then they tend to carry a broad vision for the kingdom of God that they apply in all area of their lives.”

Let’s not blame the secular university for the loss of youth. Let’s validate and encourage our Christian students who choose the secular university. Let’s step up efforts to plant Chi Alpha to assist our own youth so they can effectively live out their faith in the secular university and reach the lost. Let’s affirm and support our AG students who attend our schools and who prepare for ministry in today’s world.

Our college youth are our future, and ensuring our AG students in Bible colleges excel and our Christian students on the secular campus thrive must not be mutually exclusive. When we pass the mantle of leadership to a new generation, it must include emerging leaders from both the Christian college and secular university.

¹ AG Christian Higher Education, Fall 2007 Enrollment. (11,640 represent traditional enrollment)

² AG State of Discipleship Report, General Council, 2007.

³ All Church Ministers Report, May 29, 2008.

⁴ Ivy Jungle Campus Ministry Survey, 2005.

⁵ Hunter Baker, “Why College Doesn’t Turn Kids Secular,” *Christianity Today*, August 16, 2007.

⁶ Thom and Sam Rainer, “Don’t Blame the University,” *Outreach Magazine*, (March/April 2008), 24.

⁷ McDowell, Josh, *The Last Christian Generation*, 200.

⁸ Clem, Bill, “Transitioning Kids into College,” *Group Magazine*, July 8, 2004.

QUOTES AND NOTES

Benson Hines says in www.reachingthecollegetribe.com (2009), "The sad truth is that we have reached these people (*college students*) for Christ far less than we can or should. Despite the ease of accessing most of these tribes (*college and university campuses*), despite the relationship American churches already have with many tribe members (*college students*), and despite the clear potential of these tribes (*campuses*) to influence the world, missions work among these millions of people is given very low priority by most Christians."

Dr. Kara Powell, Fuller Seminary faculty member and Fuller Youth Institute Executive Director, has noted from an ongoing study of students that 1 out of 7 (15%) of seniors in high school feel their youth group prepared them well for transition and 85% did not. Their study recommends 4 areas that contribute to a "sticky faith":

1. leaders centered on Jesus
2. Kingdom-centered justice and compassion
3. intergenerational youth ministry
4. early preparation

*As reported at a Youth in Transition meeting, Colorado Springs, CO, 4/29/09.

Mike Woodruff, president and founder of the Ivy Jungle said, "Students need college ministers because college is a very unique time in someone's life. It's a time of freedom, freethinking and dis-equilibrium. It's a time when we are exposed to many different ideas, values, and people. Many students lose their way. Many find their way. And they both need someone standing beside them who loves Christ and who loves them."

Glen Davis, Stanford University campus missionary, said, "We must encourage our youth to prayerfully discern what is the Lord's will for their college years, and we must not discourage them if they tell us they feel a secular college is the right place for them. Instead, we should tell them they can thrive spiritually wherever they find themselves, and urge them to view their college years as a tremendous opportunity to share their faith and see God move in the lives of their unbelieving peers."

Dr. Charles Malik states in his book, *A Christian Critique of the University*, "The university dominates the world today more than any other institution: more than the church, more than the government, more than all other institutions."

UNDERSTANDING UNIVERSITY MISSIONS TERMS

What is the mission field?

The mission field is wherever the church does not exist, is not strong enough to sustain itself, or is unable to reach a certain community.

What do we mean by a missionary?

A missionary is someone who is sent and supported as a representative of Jesus to advance God's global plan. Making disciples, establishing communities of believers and setting in order ongoing ministry.

What do we hope to establish and set in order?

Redemptive communities of students.

What is the work of a missionary in our context?

To reach the lost, disciple the saved, and challenge the hardhearted. We must empower students to take shared responsibility for the development and continuation of the work of God on their campuses. We must integrate believers into the life of the Church universal as they transition from the university to the marketplace. We must teach them to invest in God's work both locally and worldwide. If we are to see these communities develop, we as missionaries must look at how we are building those communities. Longevity of the communities we build is an issue. What will we produce that can endure? Is all the work dependent on my presence? As a missionary, I want to make disciples, set new communities in order and guide leadership to ownership of the ministry. Paul's pattern is useful to help us understand patterns of mission work. He made converts, set leadership in order, and taught doctrine.

Do we have an option of working with the local church?

While our primary work as a campus missionary is to the university community, we must also cultivate and maintain healthy relationships with the traditional local church to ensure an ongoing ministry locally and positive transition for our students.



CHI ALPHA'S SEAT OF POWER

A 4-minute, 12-second DVD explaining why the university campus is a strategic mission field and why reaching students is so important for the advancement of the gospel in our world today.

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What would happen if we reached these future leaders before they became powerful?

What would happen if we reached them while they were still on campus?

The vast majority of our future leaders form their worldview and build their lifelong dreams while studying on the college campus.

For this reason, the simple chair behind a college student's desk just might be the most powerful seat on earth!

Ask for a complimentary copy of the DVD.



GOING TO COLLEGE

Ten Strategies for Success on Campus

by Curt Harlow

The transition from high school to college doesn't have to be stressful. From choosing a major to navigating dorm life, it is easy to discover what top students do to succeed on campus.

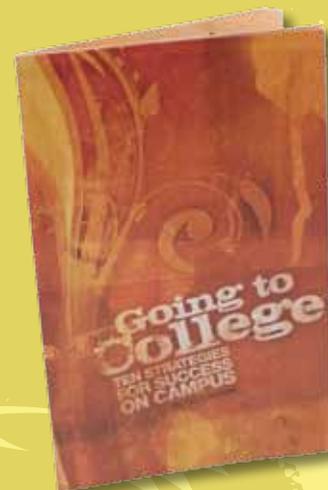
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Curt Harlow is a dynamic speaker and writer who uses stories and humor to bring home serious truth and real biblical content. He has worked with high school and college students for 20 years. He has co-authored with Kent McCorkle, a booklet, *Connecting, A Practical Help for Launching College Ministry* also available from Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA.

Ask for a complimentary copy of *Going to College* booklet.



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