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BORING OR BETTER?

When I asked a popular Resident Assistant on campus why she didn't come to Chi Alpha, she confided, "The campus pastor is a nice guy, but I can't take one more boring lecture in my life." Similarly, a pastor friend admitted to me, "Honestly, most missionaries are boring. I love Chi Alpha, Curt, but I'd rather not have campus missionaries in my pulpit."

Nothing kills a ministry like a boring speaker. Whether it is a small group, weekly large group gathering, evangelistic event, or even a one-on-one session, how we communicate plays a big role in our overall fruitfulness. What would happen if we dramatically improved our ability to engage people? After two decades of speaking on campus, I ask myself these questions to improve my communication skills.

DO I HAVE A PROFICIENCY DRIVE?

I was invited to a small round table of leaders led by Ray Johnston, pastor of the 9,000-member Bayside Church of Granite Bay, California, and one of the best biblical communicators I know. I was amazed to learn that Ray, with all his success, is still highly driven to improve as a communicator. Besides reading, listening to a wide variety of speakers, and studying his mission field, Ray goes through a self-imposed sermon evaluation process, led by a team from his congregation. Since then, I've learned that most pastors of highly effective churches practice some sort of proficiency-driven weekly evaluation on all presentations.

Paul calls all leaders to do their best at dividing the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), an exhortation that implies a lifelong pursuit of excellence in studying, modeling, and presenting the truth. In spite of this, many leaders simply stop learning about communication.

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CHI ALPHA CONNECTION

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DIRECTOR'S DESK



WHAT WE SAY AND HOW WE SAY IT

What is one of the most important tasks of campus missionaries? Speaking to the college students. It is a vitally important part of what we do, and we must do it well. In this issue, Curt Harlow, a popular speaker and creative communicator in Chi Alpha, explains what can make communication better instead of boring. How and what we communicate is crucial to our value on campus, how we impact the lives of students, and how we bring credibility to our message.

Evangelist and apologist Ravi Zacharias says, "Students today listen with their eyes and think with their feelings." College students value relationships, authenticity, an interactive environment, involvement, relevant engagement, and intellectual challenge. They want to know their leader has passion for what is shared.

What we have to say must engage our collegiate audience. Leonard Sweet, futurist and author, says, "Learning must be eye-popping, ear ringing, nose tingling, mouthwatering, and fingerlicking learning." College students learn by interacting and doing.

Also in this issue, Lennon Noland, campus minister at Angelo State U in San Angelo, Texas, demonstrates how he speaks to students about relationships each school year, and why the topic is always timely or "useful in the now."

Kevin Ford, author of *Jesus for a New Generation* says, "You do not convince them with logical arguments and linear reason. The plugged-in, uplinked, online generation sifts through tons of information every day. They discard the unusable, the ideological, the intrusive, the exploitive, and the manipulative. They process only that which is useful to our survival."

Improving how we communicate and identifying what is relevant can powerfully influence the college students we serve so they process what is "useful in the now" and thrive. We never get a second chance to make a first impression.

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

Ego, fatigue, Christian subculture, and fear drive our preaching styles instead of the desire to become more competent.

Ask yourself these questions: Could your ministry improve by getting specific feedback from students and peers about your communication skills? When is the last time you studied other communicators to improve your skills?

DO I USE INDUCTIVE DEVICES?

Next time you are listening to a boring sermon, watch the body language of the nearest 13-year-old boy. He'll be slumped in his chair, fidgeting with something, or showing in some way that the sermon is a form of torture. At some point, however, even a bad sermon will contain a small inductive device. When the preacher says something like, "That reminds me of the time," watch the boy pop his head up as if to say, "Hey, I like this part!" The reason is simple, humans tune in for inductive devices.

While deduction declares a premise and works to prove it, induction tells a story, inviting the listener to discover the premise for him- or herself along the way. So powerful are the participation-inducing qualities of induction that God chose narrative, the best of all inductive devices, to dominate the communication style of the Scripture.

When we use stories, questions, dialogue, props, drama, video, and humor in our sermons, we are actually modeling something biblical, even Christ-like. Jesus used local settings, familiar anecdotes, and the particular values of His time to engage His listeners in highly inductive ways. He did this so effectively that even days after His sermons, the disciples hotly debated the application of His talks (Matthew 13:10; John 16:17). When was the last time your students came to you, days after a sermon, demanding more teaching on the topic?

Certainly, many passages require simple and clear explanations. This desire to be clear does not mean we have to dumb down our creativity. Setting plain teaching inside the brackets of inductive devices as we prepare the introductions and conclusions of our sermons can make our teaching more understandable by engaging listeners instead of just indoctrinating them.

What is the most inductive thing you've done in communication in the last year? How could you

improve on this without compromising the content of your message?

IS MY MESSAGE USEFUL IN THE NOW?

Ever notice that only about half the students you actually touch come to your weekly meeting? With tests, going home, and every other distraction of campus life, getting students to actually commit to the large group meeting every week can be very challenging. Some leaders exacerbate this problem by being so focused on the spiritual needs of their congregation that they neglect to speak enough on the felt needs of students.

Great speaking is useful in the now moments of life, helping even the newest spiritual seeker benefit from our communication. Practical help demonstrates that as leaders, we understand the reality of student life. It also shows compassion and that we are competent at solving real issues. This understanding, compassion, and competence can dramatically increase our credibility. By helping students gain skills in their studies, decision-making, and financial lives, we gain the right to speak into their deeper spiritual issues.

Simply put, if our sermons work in the real lives of students, they will come back to our meeting the next week. Eventually, if the truth transforms them in the deeper issues of life, they will return every week of their lives.

Do your sermons contain tangible, specific help for day-to-day problems? How can you learn more about the day-to-day struggles of the students in your meetings?

DO I HAVE SUPERNATURAL EXPECTATIONS?

To raise the funds needed for my new role on the West Coast, I literally tried to connect with every single alumnus I could find. As I set out, a little fear nagged me. Would my former students still be faithful?

My fears were totally unfounded. The vast majority of our alum live amazing lives for Christ. As we talked about their journey after college, they kept reminiscing about our prayer times on campus. Sure, they remembered the sermons, but it was the altar calls, small group hot seats, and impromptu intercession times that dominated their memories and propelled them into post-collegiate success.

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT CULTURE

Students have crazy schedules that are built around semester and quarter terms, not the church calendar. They are accustomed to a world of choice; they want lots of options. With most juggling work and school, it is a time of stress and pressures.

Students require a high degree of relational investment before any results are seen. Everything is about relationships.

Students are interested in the transcendent and connecting with something bigger than themselves, a personal God.

Students need to see an embodied apologetic close and up-front where they see the power of Christ lived out in individuals and in communities.

Students are experimenters that often suspend commitment and are tentative. Coming to and following Christ is a process. They will often belong to a group before they believe.

Students are tech savvy; they are mediavores. They are a wired (or a wireless) generation. The screen is the primary medium for informing their lives and communicating.

Students are global and interconnected by the Internet.

Dennis Gaylor
national director, Chi Alpha

Relationships

A FEW THINGS OUR STUDENTS MUST KNOW

BY LENNON NOLAND

Every spring semester, we kick-off a teaching series on romantic relationships and every spring semester, we see a jump in attendance. No subject is a greater draw for them than this (unfortunately) all-consuming topic. Beyond the initial draw, it is my sincere conviction that if we don't give our students solid understanding and direction concerning romance, we are failing them as campus pastors. I've seen countless instances (as have you) where an otherwise strong Christian student isolates this issue from the rest of their faith, only to have the results devastate their spiritual progress and sometimes, their life-goals.

So what specifically do our students need to know that both save them grief and set them up for the wonderful relationship they want so badly? There are several principles that must be taught.

DATING THE WORLD'S WAY WHILE HOPING FOR BETTER RESULTS IS INSANITY.

By the time we meet them, most students have had their share of broken relationships. The typical college pattern is to rush into things based on important but surface-level matters, such as physical attraction and a few common interests: "OMG, she's hot and she brings a latte to class every day just like me! She's it!" Soon sex comes into the picture, tying the two bodies and hearts together only to have the relationship crumble under the weight of more significant issues. When break-ups follow the traversing of sacred boundaries, it can feel like a divorce. The most foolish thing students can do is take the same flawed process and simply hope for better results with someone else. They need two non-negotiables before moving forward: Common levels of faith and commitment and common life-goals. These things take a little time to discover, and that's not a bad thing at all.

WHEN GOD SAYS DO NOT BE UNEQUALLY YOKED, HE MEANS IT.

Simply put, Christians need to understand the importance of finding a partner who is a believer. There will always be a guy who is "so perfect except for..." or a girl who "isn't quite there yet but..." One thing we see frequently in Scripture is God's demand that none of His people take an unbeliever for a spouse. What does dating lead to if not marriage? So often a person with a missionary-dating mentality becomes an idol of sorts to the one they love. Since God was not in the picture before the relationship, the status of the unbeliever's pursuit of God hinges on the progress of the romance.

Godly relationships are a shared journey where together we should climb higher with God. When faith isn't shared, it's inevitably easier to get pulled down yourself than it is to pull someone up with you. If the Christian doesn't fall into a sinful lifestyle, they often stop climbing so they don't feel distant from their love interest. How can they keep climbing when every step toward God is a step away from the person they care about? Of course, students in this situation consider themselves the exception. I remind them that even the relationship between the wisest man in history and God was devastated by an unwise choice in women (1 Kings 11:4), and that in the book of Ezra, God calls out 112 men who are unequally yoked. Students must know that God is able to do

“above all that we can ask or even think,” including bringing someone with whom they can share their faith and share an attraction. This is a trust issue.

BEING “THE ONE” PRECEDES FINDING “THE ONE.”

Simply put, not everyone is in a good place for a relationship. Not that there is necessarily a perfect place to be, but there are some things on our journeys that should be settled before asking someone else to come along. I encourage students to ask themselves these questions:

1. If I've been heartbroken, have I given God time to heal me?
2. Do I know who I am in Christ, or am I looking for a person to complete me?
3. Am I in the right place with God that someone can complement my life without me making him or her my life?
4. Do I understand my calling so that I know who is a good fit for me?

I really believe that last question is critical for students who feel called to ministry.

GOD WANTS YOU TO HAVE LOTS OF AWESOME SEX...FOR FUN!

This is not a point to laugh off or ignore! As campus pastors, we must champion the correct view of God's gift of sexuality. If all we do is give a list of no-no's, we will perpetuate the falsity that you have to break God's rules if you really want a thrill. The lie that forbidden fruit is the sweetest dominates the college scene and heavily influences the Christian student's mindset.

How do we convince our young men that they are only meant to see their wives' bodies when they're immersed in a hook-up culture? How do we encourage our girls that purity is not just a command but also something that reaps a reward far beyond the wedding night? We must talk about it clearly and we must point to examples of people who have actually done it God's way. My wife and I have a great testimony in this area. If students don't hear a godly voice tell them that sex is all it is cracked up to be in the context of a holy, committed relationship, we leave them frustrated and wondering if MTV has figured out something we have not.

This topic can fill several books, but these principles are a great place to start.



Lennon Noland and his wife Christal are campus missionaries at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas, where they have served for the past six years. Lennon and Christal's teaching on romantic relationships have been a yearly highlight for students. The series is called, "The One: Being the one, finding the one, and keeping the one." They are available to come to your campus or retreat and speak on "The One." If interested, contact Lennon: Lennon@angeloxa.com or 325.212.7744.



RESOURCES

- ***Purpose-Driven Preaching*** conference sermons by Rick Warren (pastors.com). An application-driven communication series.
- ***Inductive Preaching*** by Ralph L. Lewis and Gregg Lewis (Crossway Books). Helping deductive people understand the importance of inductive communication and how to include creativity with biblical teaching.
- ***Public Speaking for Dummies*** by Malcolm Kushner (Wiley Publishing, Inc.). A practical guide to help you become an effective speaker.
- ***Between Two Worlds*** by John Stott (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company). Strong, practical, and missional guide for effective preaching.
- ***Preaching That Connects*** by Mark Galli and Craig Brian Larson (Zondervan). A solid approach to combining missional concerns with biblical content.
- ***Biblical Preaching*** by Haddon W. Robinson (Baker Academic). The preparation and delivery of expository sermons.

As I listened, I was reminded again how the Holy Spirit is the real author of transformation (1 Thessalonians 1:4). Continually learning, being inductive, and helping students with their day-to-day problems is important, but without the Holy Spirit, we can change nothing. Great communicators do their best to draw attention to God and facilitate moments of supernatural expectation.

Humility in tone, self-effacing humor, and even vulnerability regarding struggles can be powerful tools that focus the listener on the Lord's power. Of course, making Christ and His cross the central focus of our preaching is the very best way to facilitate Holy Spirit transformation. As Charles H. Spurgeon was fond of saying, "I take my text and make a beeline to the Cross."

What can we do to facilitate more moments of Spirit-induced prayer? Do your sermons point to God or to your ministry? How can you increase the expectation of the Spirit to change lives?

In the end, no one wants to be boring. We want to be better. We want to have larger groups, great mission services, and the joy of being good at communicating to the students we love. Most importantly, we want the thoroughly un-boring experience of seeing lives changed. We can do this if we are driven by proficiency, use inductive devices, are compassionately useful in the now, and set the expectation on God and His supernatural power.



Curt Harlow is an avid communicator, writer, blogger, and social networker. He has served in Chi Alpha for more than twenty years. Today he serves as the West Coast Area Director for Chi Alpha and coordinates training with several campuses with the Northern California and Nevada Campus Missionaries-in-Training program.

TODAY'S GENERATION



- Leadership Theory Test and Search
- Personal Treatment Teammates
- Life Attitude Optimistic
- Relational Style Tribal, familial
- Work Style Multi-task and collaborate
- Demographic Traits 35% non-Anglo,
- Future Perspective Impatient
- Iconic Entities Heroic video games
- Learning Styles Experiment and play
- Communication Device Text, Social Networking, VR
- Value Center Meaning and participation
- Tech Attitudes Makes videos as a team
- Audience Traits Create content, a peer
- Authority Stance Don't command
- Feedback Style Instant and on demand
- Long-Term Goals Parallel career
- Rewards Expected Meaning in work
- Job Changes Routine
- Turnoffs Waste
- Best Work Culture Positive, Collaborative, Flexible, Respectful, and Achievement

UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE NONDISCRIMINATION ISSUE

by Jeremy Tedesco

On both public and private university campuses, there is a disturbing trend to deny official recognition, pursuant to university nondiscrimination policies, to Christian student organizations, such as Chi Alpha. Typically, loss of recognition makes it difficult, if not impossible, for these groups to maintain effective ministries because denial of recognition also leads to denial of access to meeting space, information distribution opportunities, rooms for events and seminars, funding, and much more.

Nondiscrimination policies are university policies that prohibit discrimination based on certain protected characteristics. They are unobjectionable to the extent that they prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability, veteran status, national origin, and other similar characteristics. However, nondiscrimination policies become problematic for Christian student groups when they include terms, such as religion, sexual orientation, marital status, and gender identity/expression.

Without an exemption for religious student groups, which is often lacking, these policies can require Christian groups to allow an atheist to serve as president of their groups; accept a person who unrepentantly engages in homosexual behavior as an officer; stop requiring members to avoid premarital sexual relationships (believe it or not, unmarried cohabiting relationships are considered a marital status in many jurisdictions); and allow a club officer who was born a male to espouse the belief that he is female and to wear dresses to club meetings and functions. Each of these outcomes would require the affected Christian student group to express a message that would almost certainly contravene the Christian message it seeks to advocate on campus.

Is it legal for universities to enforce nondiscrimination policies against Christian student groups? The United States Supreme Court has long held that the First Amendment of the United States Constitution protects a private religious group's right to control who comprises its membership and leadership. Nondiscrimination policies that force Christian student groups to accept nonadherents as members and leaders strike at the very heart of this protection.

In the same vein, denial of recognition and its associated benefits for failure to comply with a nondiscrimination policy violates well-settled First Amendment principles as well. (Note: These First Amendment protections do not apply to religious student groups

at private schools, but such groups often have other remedies available to them.) Despite these strong precedents, legal battles across the country will define the constitutional rights of religious student groups. If religious groups do not fight for their rights, they will lose them, including the right to exist!

The law is in flux right now and may be different depending on the state in which your group is located. If you want to know the status of the fight in your state, contact the Alliance Defense Fund's Center for Academic Freedom (<http://www.centerforacademicfreedom.org/main/default.aspx>).

So, what is the best way to handle the growing threat that a nondiscrimination policy will be applied to your campus group? First, be prepared. Your club constitution and/or bylaws should clearly articulate your religious mission. Then, put appropriate leadership and membership restrictions in place to achieve this mission. A good rule of thumb is to adopt creedal and behavioral restrictions for those people (whether leaders, voting members, or general members) who exercise any amount of control over the group's identity or mission, or who participate in expressing the group's Christian message, either within the group or to the greater campus

community.

Second, should your university advise you that your group's constitution violates its nondiscrimination policy, ask for a specific explanation as to how and get that explanation in writing, if possible. Also, review the nondiscrimination policy and see if it contains an exemption for religious student groups. Some officials are unaware of the existence of such an exemption, and are willing to grant an exemption if university policy allows it.

Third, if the university insists that your group is violating its nondiscrimination policy, seek help. Chi Alpha Campus Ministries can provide model constitutions or referral information should advice or legal assistance be necessary.

LEGAL BATTLES ACROSS THE COUNTRY
WILL DEFINE THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS
OF RELIGIOUS STUDENT GROUPS.
IF RELIGIOUS GROUPS DO NOT FIGHT FOR
THEIR RIGHTS, THEY WILL LOSE THEM,
INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO EXIST!



Jeremy Tedesco is an attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF)

For more information: 1.800.Tell.ADF and check out: www.SpeakUpMovement.org an incredible new Web site resource to protect and promote our religious rights at public universities. Learn about your rights on campus, resources for campus leaders and students, campus censorship near you, and student stories.

Quotes and News

THIS GENERATION WANTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BUT OVER THE WEEKEND.

"This generation is pursuing both influence and affluence. They want to change the world, but they are frequently self-indulged narcissists. They do not want to give up too much free time, but they want to do "work" that matters; that impacts their world in a measurable way. They are used to getting what they want—new clothes, new technology, earn the right grades in school. ...They want to solve problems and make a difference. But they want to do it over a weekend. Or, on a short-term mission trip. And they don't want to wait until tomorrow to do it. After all, they have lots of other things they want to accomplish in their lives."

Tim Elmore in *Leadership Link*, July 2009.

ELEVEN PERCENT OF CHRISTIANS WHO LEAVE THE CHURCH DO SO DURING COLLEGE.

"Most people assume that students are lost in college. We've always been trying to prepare our kids for college (and I still think that's a critical thing to do, of course), but it turns out that only 11 percent of those who have left the Church did so during their college years. Almost 90 percent of them were lost in middle school and high school. By the time they got to college, they were already gone! About 40 percent are leaving the Church during elementary and middle school years."

Already Gone: Why your kids will quit church and what you can do to stop it
by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer (Master Books 2009).

CHI ALPHA SHOWS 6.9 PERCENT INCREASE IN GROUPS.

Chi Alpha saw a 6.9 percent net gain in new groups with the most chartered groups in its history. Five years ago, Chi Alpha had just over 200 groups. Today almost 20,000 students participate in Chi Alpha on 260 campuses nationwide. Dennis Gaylor, Chi Alpha national director, states, "Training new leaders each year is contributing to the expansion." Fifty-five personnel preparing to be a campus missionary attended the annual Reach the University Institute (RUI) with most combining this training with the 9- to 10-month internship program. The nationally recognized internships operate on 19 campuses and place interns in the middle of campus, shoulder to shoulder, with proven Chi Alpha leaders. They learn campus evangelism, cell group discipleship, preaching, prayer, and character development, and complete courses for ministerial credentials.

Many who are becoming campus missionaries came to Christ through Chi Alpha or learned about ministry as they led Bible studies and conducted outreach. Upon graduation, many are giving a year back to campus ministry, recognizing the benefit Chi Alpha was to them. They become campus missionary associates. This Chi Alpha personnel category has accelerated by 76 percent in the past five years. More and more career campus missionaries are coming from this pool of associates.