

## FOREWORD

In the late 1960s a dream was born. Quietly at first, amid the deafening cries for change in the United States, a mustard seed was beginning to grow that would change the world. A group of young men and women in their twenties were led by God's Spirit to a common vision—the vision of a thriving evangelistic campus ministry making disciples on every college campus in the United States.

In the following decades, campus ministries were established or revitalized in every corner of the country. Great numbers of students were baptized every semester, and some ministries baptized over 100 students on a single campus in a calendar year. Hundreds of students were inspired to go into the full-time ministry stateside and eventually internationally. New campus ministries were begun in cities and countries that had been considered unresponsive to the message of Jesus Christ.

I remember those early years as a time, especially in the United States, of radical action and rhetoric in our society. Cries of revolution and demands for change began numerous movements: The Sexual Revolution, Women's Liberation, Civil Rights, Black Power and anti-war riots and demonstrations were the turbulent and historic movements of the day. There was also great generational division and rebellion, hence the rallying cry: "Don't trust anyone over 30." The beliefs and institutions of our parents were being challenged at every turn. I remember on my campus, the University of Florida, seeing National Guard tanks rolling down the street to quell student riots. In front of my dorm fellow students "streaked" (ran naked) across campus. To a young man of eighteen, the world seemed like a crazy and confused place.

### **A Different Kind of Movement**

In the midst of all of this chaos, God was initiating a different kind of revolution. He gathered groups of campus disciples and visionary leaders together to transform what had been campus religious clubs in the Churches of Christ into dynamic and growing campus ministries. Their new mission was to *minister* to the campus (the lost), not themselves. They preached the Lordship of Christ (discipleship) and the belief that the only true Christians were those who not only believed in Christ, but followed him (John 8:31–32, I John 2:5–6) and gave up everything to become his disciples (Luke 14:33).

I heard this message, and after several months of my freshman year at UF, I responded to the call of Jesus and was baptized into him at 4:00 AM on Thursday morning, December 5, 1969. I was baptized with all of my clothes on and my wallet in my pocket. I did this because I wanted God to put to death my old self, and I wanted to completely surrender to his will for my life. I will be forever indebted to the minister, Chuck Lucas, and the elders, Richard Whitehead and Rogers Bartley, of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Church of Christ (later the Crossroads Church of Christ) for changing my life and destiny forever.

In the campus ministry I met the young men and women who would become my lifetime friends and influences. They are far too many to name, but they will know who they are as they read this sentence. I met my precious wife, of thirty-two years, Kelly Chandler Brown, in my campus ministry. I learned of true brotherhood, conviction of sin, purity in dating, commitment to “one another” relationships, Biblical conversion, and faith in the promises of the Bible. I learned that nothing is impossible for those who truly believe and seek first the kingdom of God. I can still hear the booming voice of Richard Whitehead, as he quoted frequently, Ephesians 3:20–21:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

### **Unique Role of Campus Ministry**

In those years, God also opened my eyes to the unique role of campus ministry in his kingdom. In his providence, he gathers thousands of the brightest and the best in every country of the world into college and university educational systems where they live for four to five years during the most open-minded and receptive time in their lives. Early in their lives before their idealism, creativity and zeal are misdirected or crushed, the message of Christ can capture their minds and hearts to change the world by giving their lives first to God.

Even on small universities and out of the way places, international students come from around the globe and are led to Christ, and then equipped to return to their countries (as the Ethiopian did in Acts 8) to build up or plant Christ's church there. Campus ministry also provides the training vehicle for three to four years to teach new disciples how to become future leaders in their cities and churches after graduation. It is well documented how many of the evangelists, elders and other leaders in churches were converted and /or trained for ministry while disciples on campus.

Some trace the roots of campus ministry back to Acts 19 and the apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus. There "he took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus." The result was that within two years "all who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:9-10). This likely was a result of the students who were in this campus setting returning to their towns in Asia and spreading the message of Jesus.

A major aspect of the campus ministry movement has always been daily Bible discussions on campus. We called them soul talks in the late 60s and early 70s. Many other names (Bible talks, etc.) have been used since. When I was in college these small group discussions were generally in the dorms, fraternities and sororities and often began at 10:00 PM. They also took place between classes and during lunch break, and every day there were dozens of discussions and Bible studies with two to four students in public and private settings.

Daily discussions also took place among disciples. Hebrews 3:12–13 (daily encouragement) was not just preached but practiced devotedly (Acts 2:42). In my campus ministry (and those I led in later years) we also met together as prayer or discipling partners, at Wednesday night services, Friday night devotionals, Saturday morning brothers' football, and Sunday church practically all day.

The rest of the week was all about living every day with the understanding that we had been called out by Jesus Christ to a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—the opportunity to take up our cross and influence an entire generation with the simple confession and profound implication that *Jesus is Lord*.

The writers of the following chapters are friends of mine, and I respect them greatly. They are committed to this ongoing vision that was first sparked in our hearts decades ago. As you read this book, I challenge you to embrace the mission and lifestyle it outlines. If you do, your life will never be the same. *Disciples on Campus*...that says it all. As in Jesus' day, there are many who believe, few who follow. Make it your commitment to be part of this happy few.

There's no other time in your life like your years on campus. It passes quickly. Don't hold back. Give your heart and yourself completely, and bloom where God has planted you in your cam-

pus ministry. Be bold. Build lifelong relationships. Preach the word. Stay humble. Be trained. Be changed. Dream big. Change your campus. Change the world.

I consider it among my greatest privileges to have been a disciple in my college years. Kelly and I feel passionately every day the truth and priority expressed in Psalm 71:17–18 (emphasis mine):

Since my youth, O God, you have taught me,  
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.  
Even when I am old and gray,  
do not forsake me, O God,  
till I declare your power to *the next generation*,  
your might to all who are to come.

People have asked me through the years what was the secret of those early campus ministry days. What caused so many to be baptized, so many to be trained and inspired? I have answered in various ways over the years. I have even taught courses outlining the key elements as I understood them. I answer differently these days. I believe it was nothing less than “the gracious hand of our God” who moved so powerfully by his Spirit (not by human effort). And he is ready to do it again—only in greater ways than we have ever experienced or imagined.

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

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