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# POSTCARDS FROM CORINTH REVISITING CAMPUS DISCIPLESHIP

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORLDWIDE STUDENT NETWORK

This is the Users Guide for personal discipleship. While The Compass provides content for one-on-one discipleship, Postcards addresses the practice, philosophy, and difficult issues that are a part of discipleship. Here, for example, is a partial list of the topics covered:

Habitual Sin, Authority Issues, Christian Counseling, Fasting, Theological Conflicts, Coaching Through Trials, Challenging to Conferences, Confronting Sin, Ministering Cross-Culturally, The Role of Faith, Difficulties in Sharing the Ministry of the Spirit, Selection, Conflict Resolution, Why Does Leadership Matter, Conducting Basic Follow-up... Postcards contains 47 articles on all critical issues of discipleship.

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# World Poverty

WSN, and a brief history of the world

There is a starving world and yet every day I scrape mounds of food off my plate and into a bloated garbage bag. The problem isn't a lack of compassion and certainly not a lack of food. It is an issue of feasibility: I have no simple way to ship my plate of food overseas and no clue of where I would send it—"Third World Poor Box 3700." This has also been the struggle of world missions: the need for a feasible plan or strategy to bring the gospel to every nation. The campus ministry and its missions strategy really does provide a compelling solution, but that does us little good if we ourselves don't fully understand it, and the majority of us don't.

My chief concern is to help our disciples become world Christians. World Christians are followers of Christ who have taken personal ownership of the Great Commission and who share Christ's heart to see all nations receive the gospel. The most compelling element in creating vision for world evangelization is the feasibility to pull it off. When our disciples understand that this is possible, then they are more likely to engage in the mission. What follows is a brief history of campus missions, where we are today, and where may soon be headed. While history is only interesting to a select few, you really do need to know this and if it helps start you in a history mood here are a few random dates to memorize: 1923, 1847, 536, 1941, 1742, 1812, 1963, and please don't forget 1492.

## THE HISTORY OF CAMPUS MISSIONS

The history of campus missions began at universities in places such as Wittenberg, Zurich, and Geneva. At these places, the first missionaries received their training, motivation, and marching orders. These movements gave rise to the Reformation. The impetus of the university system in America was the pedagogy of missionaries and pastors. (The curriculum to ridicule them being a later development. But for the sake of time and space we will fast forward to the last century or so.)



In 1886 the first Christian conference for college students was held in 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 accept 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 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 more than 150 campuses giving the same challenge, and seeing an additional 2,100 students sign the pledge. For more than 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 foray in the history of the church.

In 1948 the Student Volunteer Movement splintered. Most of the movement began to focus its attention on social issues. But those still with a heart for evangelism, joined with a newly formed college ministry and held their first missions conference in Urbana, Illinois. That group was InterVarsity.

In his book *Revive Us Again*, author Joel Carpenter notes that after World War II the call to fulfill the Great Commission once again ran into a slump in this country. It was at the point of its lowest ebb that this first InterVarsity conference was held. Of the 526 in attendance, 300 made decisions to go into full-time Christian ministry. InterVarsity was soon joined by Campus Crusade for Christ and other campus ministries and a new missionary enterprise springing from the campus and flowing out to the world was once again underway.

## THE STRATEGY BEHIND CAMPUS MISSIONS

As best as I can tell, no one sat down and thought up the strategy of fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching the college campus. Campus ministry is more the result of the observation that God has chosen to use college students as His vehicle to accelerate the evangelism of the world. Reaching the college campus is His strategy to help fulfill the Great Commission.

When you think about why God might have chosen to have spiritual revival and world missions emanate from the university, you begin to realize what a profound strategy it is. Consider the following questions.

### WHEN IS A PERSON MOST SPIRITUALLY OPEN TO THE GOSPEL?

Before a person leaves college, his worldview and trajectory in life will be set, and it is not easily altered. There is a unique window of time when a young man or woman breaks from their parents and their beliefs, and decides for themselves what they will believe and what they will live and die for. This window of time is the college years.

## HOW CAN WE MOST EASILY COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL TO OTHER COUNTRIES?



p. 161

English is spoken on almost every college campus throughout the world. It is the common language—the *lingua franca*. This is not true of the many villages, towns, and cities where people are less educated. You can walk onto almost any university in the world and get involved in a spiritual conversation in English without having to go through years of learning the language.

## WHO WILL MOST EFFECT CHANGE WITHIN A FOREIGN COUNTRY?

All of the key leaders (political, social, military) in any foreign country ultimately come from universities. The most strategic way to reach a nation with the gospel is by reaching its next generation of leaders, and the greatest collection of them will always be at the campuses.

## HOW CAN WE BEST ACCESS COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANITY IS NOT LEGAL?

The answer is a student visa. There are many Islamic states, for example, which won't allow missionaries to enter their country. However, if you enter the country with a student visa, go to their university, and spend your U.S. dollars to take a class, you are relatively free to do anything you like and remain in the country. Thus reaching foreign universities is not only easy due to the speaking of English, in some cases it's the only way to access a country with the gospel.

## WHERE WILL THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS COME FROM IN THIS COUNTRY?

The majority of church leaders today were influenced or led into ministry through involvement with a campus ministry. It is in the context of a campus ministry that students learn to share their faith, disciple others, and lead spiritually. It is this introduction into ministry that brings to light for many their calling into the pastorate or some form of Christian leadership. Think about this for a moment. How many people from your home church have gone into ministry? Each year anywhere from a handful to several dozen leave the local campus ministry to be Christian leaders in their church or full-time pastors and missionaries.

## HOW WILL WE GET MORE LABORERS TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION?



p. 162

College students have their summers relatively free. Over the course of the summer, college students can go on missionary trips, get into any country with a student visa, and plant a ministry. College students have turned out to be an unforeseen (part-time) missionary labor force. There will be no other time in their lives where they will have three or four months free unless that time is preceded by the words, “You’re fired!”

### THE REFINEMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The history of missions is one of zeal not acumen, hindsight instead of foresight. Missionaries are typically doers: they blaze a trail and then note after the fact what worked and what didn’t. Which, in hindsight, is probably best for the greatest challenge to missions is to go, and too much strategizing on the front end can lead to the planting of new missions agency in the states rather than new ministries overseas.

The campus ministry is no different and our current strategies are a product of several decades of adaptation, refinement, and probably some major screw-ups forever buried in a file drawer in Lake Hart with surviving members in Federal relocation programs. Many years ago we sent summer missions teams wherever there was an open door, or wherever anyone had a “heart” to go. But if these missionary initiatives were to bear lasting fruit, they needed more focus. This came in three areas.

First, there was the birth of the partnership strategy. Each region of the U.S. would take responsibility to pioneer ministry in three to five countries—no overlaps or overlooked nations. Agreements were drawn up to ensure that the task was completed and the labor force didn’t dry up—campus staff and students would continue to come for summer missions. When needed, multiple U.S. campuses would share the task of honoring these agreements. The shotgun missionary approach of the previous decades was becoming a little more like a guided missile.

Second, there needed to be a refinement of the partnership process. This was broken into five stages sequencing U.S. involvement in developing the countries campus ministry. Here are those five stages:

#### • STAGE ONE: SUMMER PROJECT •

In about eight weeks, visiting teams of Christian students are able to create relationships, share the gospel, and disciple young believers on international campuses where the gospel has never traveled. They leave behind the seed of what will become a growing ministry on that campus.

#### • STAGE TWO: STINT •

How does this planted mustard seed become a growing movement? Short-term International (STINT) missionaries were sent to invest one or two years cultivating what was sown over the summer. They also

provide leadership, teaching, and further evangelism so that by the time they leave, a healthy maturing ministry is in place.

• **STAGE THREE: INTERNATIONAL CAMPUS STAFF** •

Like the ministries planted by the apostle Paul, these movements still lack maturity, need leadership continuity, and require someone to make gospel inroads on campuses elsewhere. Filling this “Timothy” role are missionaries who will dig in and invest three to five years, or longer, in the culture.

• **STAGE FOUR: NATIONAL LEADERSHIP** •

In this cycle of ministry, the leadership on the campus and in the country is properly passed on to nationals: to those original converts now mature enough to lead the ministry in their own country.

• **STAGE FIVE: PARTNERING NATIONS** •

At this final stage new life emerges in two areas. The nation, young in its faith, becomes a participant in missions, sending their own students to minister in other nations. Concurrently, U.S. students are now free to partner with new campuses in other countries. This is the process.

Not all countries and not all campuses are equally strategic in getting to the entire world, which is why we don’t have campus staff at Hoboken Culinary college, though I would volunteer if it became available—mmm donuts. So the third area of focus was to identify 200 of the most highly leveraged campuses in the world and plans were made to pioneer ministries at these locations. As of a couple of years ago, all 200 had an established ministry.

These strategic refinements in our campus missions strategy were significant enough to warrant a name and dedicated staff to aid in their development. This ministry is known today as the Worldwide Student Network (WSN), not to be confused with the World Wide Web (WWW).

## THE NEW FRONTIERS

Well that brings us just about current. So where do we go from here? The following are the newest WSN initiatives and they all revolve around one principle, partnership.

### NATIONS PARTNERING WITH NATIONS

As the leadership of these countries mature, we are entering a new phase in world missions, the final phase of multinational partnerships: nations partnering with nations to reach still other nations. This is where the missionary enterprise will grow exponentially.





Take, for example, a recent missions project held in Turkey. In the past, these projects were typically led by U.S. staff and students who travel to a partnership country to share the gospel. This was not the case here. This project comprised of staff and students from nine countries partnering together to reach Turkey.

And Europe is not the only place seeing this happen: Mexican students will be going to Chile; Thai students are going to Cambodia; Poland to Russia; Albania to Turkey; Egypt to the Middle East. We are witnessing a growing network of nations partnering with nations.

## PARTNERING WITH CHURCHES TO PLANT CHURCHES

The campus ministry continues to pioneer in cities throughout the world and as the ministry grows and students graduate (which they tend to do), there is often no local church able to support and sustain these young believers. The situation, viewed from another angle, is not a problem, but an opportunity. Here is the critical mass of new Christians that could form the core of a church planting effort in that city and nation—a church planters dream.

This was always the long-term vision of Campus Crusade to reach every nation with the gospel using the college campus as the stepping stone. *No Boundaries* is a new strategy to take the vision beyond the college campus by forming partnerships with local churches, helping them to mobilize their labor, and linking our international campus ministry with their congregation, all with the goal of planting churches in that city.

## GLOBAL PARTNERS

Global Partners is a growing network of business and professional leaders whose hearts are surrendered to Christ, and desire to leverage their access, platform, finances, and expertise to open up doors for the gospel around the world.

Globalization is the new economic reality. The world tethered ever tighter through the strands of technology, telecommunications, free markets, finance, and business.

This gives American business leaders a powerful platform to access countries around the world. The Global Partners strategy attempts to seize this opportunity, connecting godly business leaders with ministry venues, paving the way for evangelism and missions opportunities internationally.

## MISSIOLOGY

Hopefully that provides a working knowledge of campus missions, which is a very strategic and very large slice of the mission's pie. But it is not the whole pie. There is a world of church missions focused on the Great Commission but with a mandate to

plant churches within every people group on earth. In helping your disciple become a world Christian, you will find it useful to be familiar with the books and publications dedicated to church missions. They are a treasure trove of resources and information highly applicable to campus missions.

I highly recommend the book *Perspectives*. It contains the current thinking on world missions, the latest strategies, historical errors, motivation for missions, writings of the great missionaries, biblical teaching on missions, current statistics: it has everything. There are a ton of articles to pass on to your disciples to help them develop into world Christians. The book is a compendium of the class reading for a course of the same name—*Perspectives*. This course is taught at churches around the country and if it is available near you, consider taking your disciples with you.

This course and book come from the U.S. Center for World Missions, a great missionary organization. They also publish a monthly magazine called *Frontiers* that will help you keep in touch with what is happening in church missions around the world. Between the *Perspectives* book and the magazine you will have invaluable resources to share with your disciple.

While the focus of the U.S. Center for World Missions is on church planting, there is so much commonality that it transfers well into campus missions. You'll also find that some of the new ideas in church missions are already being implemented in some form in campus missions.

## CAMPUS, COVERAGE AND COMMUNITY

The organization of Campus Crusade is the umbrella name for dozens of ministries other than campus. So where do all of these fit in? In fulfilling the Great Commission, Campus Crusade has a three-fold approach to reaching a country with the gospel. As mentioned, there is the campus mission strategy reaching the country through targeting the college audience. In addition to this is what is called the community strategy, which targets the major cities through a variety of means: business and athletic ministries, community outreaches, providing school teachers, assisting church plants, and whatever other creative means might be employed.

If you reach the epicenters of the campus and city, you have done much to reach the population of a country. But you still haven't fully saturated it with the gospel. That's why we have a coverage strategy. A good example of how this works, and by far the most effective, is the use of the "JESUS" film. Film teams scour the countryside looking to show the film in towns and remote villages. The team members who show the "JESUS" film partner with multiple churches and denominations to follow up and plant churches from the evangelistic fruit. More than six billion people have been exposed to the gospel through the "JESUS" film (this includes multiple viewings by people).



p. 165

### YOUR EXAMPLE

Our participation in missions is aided by knowing how our contribution fits into the bigger picture, and encouragement flows from knowing we have a feasible plan. If your goal is a disciple with a world vision you can bypass some of the information by simply going overseas and taking your disciple with you. There is nothing that communicates a heart for the world like the example you set. The reverse is also true: no matter how much or how well you communicate, if your disciples do not see your willingness to go, they will have their own hesitations.

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