

Influential Christian Ministry

by Joseph McRae Mellichamp

Biblical Basis

The Lord Jesus issued instructions to His disciples prior to leaving them. Two primary verses in this regard are: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19) and, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8b). Making disciples, as Christ stated in Matthew, is to be a natural preoccupation for His followers. The verse in Acts can be thought of in terms of spheres of influence. A believer's Jerusalem might be the family, neighborhood, or church. Judea would be the workplace or the larger community. Samaria is a more distant sphere of influence. Taken together, these verses communicate clearly that the Lord expected His disciples to have an influence for Him wherever they went, i.e., in their spheres of influence. For the Christian professor, this includes the university. Another way of looking at this is that it simply does not make sense to think that a Christian would spend a great deal of his or her life in a particular place (the university campus), 40 to 50 hours a week or more, and have no influence for Christ there.

Many Christians today think that their involvement in their church constitutes their ministry. However, in Ephesians 4:11-12 describing the various offices of the church, the Apostle Paul wrote, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ." This implies that an important function of the church is to equip believers for ministry. Where does ministry occur? Some of it occurs in the church, but it can and does also occur outside of the church in the home, the neighborhood, the community and the workplace. In fact, some churches even have signs posted by the exits of the church building that declare, "You are now entering the mission field." In Colossians 4:17, Paul wrote, "And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received from the Lord, that you may fulfill it.' " Every Christian has received a ministry from the Lord; like Archippus, we need to attend to its fulfillment.

To be sure, a number of university professors are Christians. But many of them are not having an influence for Christ on the university campus. Why is this? For some, it is a matter of not knowing what to do or how to do it. This is a simple problem that has a simple solution, one which Christian Leadership Ministries is attempting to address; we can help inform and equip those professors. For many, the problem is fear—that if one becomes too vocal or visible on campus, one might invite trouble. This problem can be dealt with if one knows what is permissible and what is effective in terms of ministering on the campus. For some Christian professors, the real issue is one of approval. The Apostle John wrote in John 12:42-43, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." A Christian professor seeking the approval of God will find ways of influencing those around him or her in the university for Christ.

For Christian professors who are married, it is particularly important that they see the possibilities for being a part of the university faith community and ministering to the campus as a couple. Faculty spouses can make significant contributions to a Christian Faculty/Staff Fellowship or Forum. The ministry of encouragement to other Christian faculty who are married can often be done most effectively as a couple. Many spouses of professors have management/administrative talents that are often needed in the local Christian faculty ministry (due to lack of time and/or talent in this area). Spouses can play a significant role in helping to organize special campus events as well as regular weekly or monthly meetings. Spouses can be involved in the development of the vision for the campus and strategies for reaching that vision; involvement at the planning and vision stage is essential if spouses are to feel ownership and enthusiastic

support for the planned activities. Additionally, many significant ministry opportunities are created by opening one's home. Some of the most effective outreaches to students, such as "Friday Night at the Movies," are done in the home and can best be accomplished with the enthusiastic support of one's spouse. Similarly, outreaches to faculty colleagues such as the Search Ministry Discussion/Dessert Series are also done in the home.

Character Attributes

A number of character attributes distinguish the Christian professor with respect to ministry, including:

1. Understands the ideological battle in the university today. He or she realizes that some universities are no longer an open market place for ideas; that Christianity has effectively been marginalized in the university in general; and that there is often no place in the curriculum or in the classroom for open inquiry involving Christian ideas or the Christian worldview.
2. Views the university campus as a significant place of ministry. He or she understands that Christ's commission to His disciples compels us to seek to have an influence for the Savior on the university campus. This includes reaching out to students and colleagues with the gospel as well as attempting to change the university for good—trying to return Christian ideas and values to a prominent place in the university.
3. Committed to evangelism and discipleship. He or she realizes that all societal problems, including those besetting the university, are fundamentally individual problems that can only be solved as individuals recognize their position before God and are reconciled to Him. The Christian professor recognizes that evangelism is necessary to bring men and women into a right relationship with God and discipleship is necessary if they are to fulfill their potential in Christ.
4. Involved *individually* in evangelism and discipleship activities. He or she is personally involved in activities aimed at introducing individuals in the university community to the Lord Jesus Christ and mentoring them in their faith. The exact form of these activities depends on a number of factors including the abilities and interests of the professor, the opportunities available to the professor, etc. The Christian professor, though, will be involved in such activities at a significant level.
5. Involved *with others* in evangelism and discipleship activities. Realizing the importance of synergy in relationships, he or she will seek to be involved with others of like mind in jointly influencing the university for Christ. Again, the exact form of these activities will depend on the personalities involved, the university situation and other factors. The common thread in all such joint activity is a concerted effort to apply the creativity, which professors typically devote to professional activities, to demonstrating the relevance of Christianity in the university.

Training Modules

The following training modules are available to help you develop in the area of your Christian ministry:

Ministering in the Secular University. This Christian Leadership Ministries workshop outlines how to minister as a professor or staff member in a secular university setting. Included are sections on ministering individually, ministering together with Christian colleagues and ministering nationally and internationally. (*Workshop notes available at www.leaderu.com/cl-institute/index.html*)

How You Can Be a Fruitful Witness, How You Can Introduce Others to Christ. These booklets cover the basics of how to effectively share your faith in Christ with another person. Included are how to assess spiritual interest, ways of turning conversations to spiritual discussions, how to clearly present the gospel,

how to answer difficult questions, and how to bring a person to a point of decision. (*Available as Transferable Concepts from Campus Crusade for Christ, and on line at www.ccci.org/transferable_concepts*)

Freedom of Expression in the University. A workshop which details the rights of Christian university and college professors. The workshop summarizes relevant legal cases and suggests what are appropriate and legal activities in which Christian professors can engage. Also included are suggestions to follow if in fact one does encounter opposition from the administration or others for being visible and/or vocal. (*Available on video from Christian Leadership Ministries*)

Relating to Students. A workshop that presents the biblical mandate for reaching out to students and describes a number of attractive and effective strategies for doing so. (*Available on video from Christian Leadership Ministries*)

Campus Culture. This workshop characterizes the current situation on university campuses including gay/lesbian issues, politically correct issues, multiculturalism, postmodernism, and materialism. (*Workshop notes are available from Christian Leadership Ministries*)

Touching Your World: Reaching Out as a Faculty Wife. A resource manual for faculty wives who want to minister to students and others in the university community. Four supplements are also available: *How to Share your Faith, Sharing Your Story—Developing a Personal Testimony, Discovering the Good Part—Hospitality* and *A Dessert-Discussion on our Godly Heritage*. (*Available from Christian Leadership Ministries; complete text available on line at www.leaderu.com/touching*)

Living Proof. A video series of 12 one-hour sessions on how to identify yourself as a Christian and how to turn conversations to spiritual matters and the gospel. (*Available on video from The Navigators, www.gospelcom.net/navs*)

One-to-One Discipling. A nine-lesson study to be used by one person in discipling another. (*Available from Al Broom, Multiplication Ministries, Vista, CA. 619-598-0909*)

Leadership. A video workshop which presents biblically based principles of leadership and how these principles might be implemented by a Christian university or college professor. The workshop also presents a number of strategies for working with other Christian professors and staff members on campus. (*Available on video from Christian Leadership Ministries*)

Action Points

The following are useful exercises for the Christian professor or staff member who wishes to address the issue of Christian ministry.

1. Determine whether there is a Christian Faculty/Staff Fellowship (or Forum) on your campus. If there is one and you are not currently involved, consider participating. If there is not one, consider enlisting other Christian professors and academic staff to begin one. Organize the Fellowship in such a way that faculty spouses are vitally included in the planning and activities, which will build a much stronger university faith community.
2. Read ***Ministering in the Secular University: A Guide for Christian Professors and Staff***. Prayerfully consider opportunities you have as an individual Christian professor or staff member to influence your students and colleagues.
3. If you are married, discuss with and pray with your spouse concerning how he or she might be involved

more effectively with you in ministering to your students and colleagues and to the university community in general.

Suggested Reading

Adsit, Christopher. *Personal Disciplemaking*. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life. 1988.

Bright, Bill. *Witnessing Without Fear*. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life. 1987.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York, NY: Macmillan. 1949.

Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company. 1963.

Hendricks, Howard and Bill Hendricks. *As Iron Sharpens Iron*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press. 1995.

Mellichamp, Joseph McRae. *Ministering in the Secular University: A Guide for Christian Professors and Staff*. Carrollton, TX: Lewis and Stanley. 1997.

(Complete text available on line at www.leaderu.com/msu/index.html)

Stanley, Paul and Robert Clinton. *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress. 1992.

Action Steps. Record here any steps you feel impressed to take as a result of having considered the material in this section on Christian Ministry.