

# Unpacking the Knapsack of Campus Ministry

If asked to explain your theology of ministry, what do you say?

- If asked, what is the most important aspect of Campus Ministry, what would you tell us?
- What scriptures do you use to inform the ways in which you do Campus Ministry?
- Describe your theology of welcome?
- What does your Campus ministry offer a freshman?
- What does your ministry offering continuing students?

Although I am not garden fresh in the game of Campus ministry I have the essence in my heart and thought I would give it a try so as to keep true to my own leadership pet -peeve, which is to never allow others to do what I am not willing to do!

Here it goes:

## A Theology of Campus Ministry?

### **Proverbs 3:5-7**

New International Version (NIV)

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. [a]

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

This scripture illustrates that a Theology for Campus Ministry is to realize our need for God's help and to somehow help students to trust in God for themselves. It is important to lead students to the notion of submitting unto God; so that God will direct their paths (Jeremiah 29:11). Consequently, there are a few things that makes campus ministry work well; the first is an acknowledgement of God in everything that is done in ministry; whether it be on campus, through service opportunities or missions abroad; God's love and grace is reason for our existence.

Secondly, any Campus Ministry worth its weight in gold should be concerned about every student's journey to College life. With that, we should also recognize how different each student's journey is, and as they progress, their needs within ministry may transform.

Thirdly, there must be an integration and acknowledgement of the gifts and talents that each student possesses and brings to bear at the respective Campus ministry. For example, a student may be extremely musically gifted with the talent of song. Those are unique gifts to be appreciated and used to bring God all of the praise.

## **Rivet the thought:**

That campus ministry could become more of a spiritual laboratory where young people can truly discover and uncover their gifts to lead and serve in the world. Hence, the Campus Minister becomes more of a facilitator in what the Spirit of God wants to do in helping Young Adults become the best of whoever they are to become.

## **The Student's Journey is important!**

Acknowledging every student's journey is crucial; meaning that the transition from home to a college/University setting is simultaneously awesome and frightening. Yet embodied in this acknowledgement is the loss of a safe sacred space called home. Why is this significant? This is significant because home is the place where most students receive their love and support and now the climate of College and University demands that each student becomes individuated. It is obvious that many parents love their children and would love to be there in boundless ways but the Journey from home to University is a hard and an exceptionally personal journey. Simply put, both student and parent are grieving but must let go. Therefore my mantra to each student and parent is; "You do not have to walk alone."

Truth is, when students initially arrive at the University, they find themselves immediately swimming in an effervescent system that flows quicker and harder than some of the most challenging currents of the sea. However, we must also remember that this is not just a challenge for freshmen; this is a continuous challenge for returning students who are progressing to different levels of their spirituality. As they matriculate, they will be in numerous seasons of transitions, that as campus ministers, we have to recognize and offer them that same comfort of "home". As a young adult matures, the need to be connected to a faith community does not diminish, in fact it grows. So, where feasible, work to develop opportunities for a new faith community that offers the possibility of continued growth. An example would be to facilitate a separate study group for older young adults; another might be a worship experience that is virtual or physical. Whatever the needs of the young adults in your area, meet with them and determine if a need of this type exists and together, formulate strategies on how to meet that need.

Therefore, the need for Campus Ministry becomes imperative in helping Young Adults to make the adjustments to and through Campus Life. In addition, Campus Ministry assists and challenges Young Adults to grow in their faith in multiple ways. Again, home is the place where most students have learned to become who they are presently and now the University becomes the place of differentiation; hence the term, 'alma mater'. Some students will find their trade and others their vocation. Some students will find Graduate School while others, a husband or a wife thus again making Campus ministry and the Campus Minister indispensable to Young Adult Life!

## **Question to assist you in your Theology of welcome?**

1. Are there welcoming signs outside the building?
2. How are your students identified and how will others know that they belong to your ministry?
3. How do you promote the ministry?
4. How will be folks enlighten about activities from your center?

## **Help students hold on to important traditions and values:**

The other thing that Campus Ministry must do well is to admonish students to remain God connected in this ever changing environment and to always be receptive to the good news, that with God all things are possible (Philippians 4:13)! In so doing, Campus ministry can become a sacred space where Young Adults can and often experience unconditional love and acceptance in a non-judgmental environment, which what many experience as the feeling of “home”. This is the good soil that is needed for Campus ministry to advance. Campus minister’s must become good listeners; to both the Holy Spirit and to the needs of the students. Sometimes, we need to go beyond “just church”. We had to prepare our young leaders in all aspects of their lives. Furthermore, at James Madison I loved to survey students to see what kind of classes they would like to be a part of. I taught life classes such as, “Are you really ready for Marriage”? I offered mock interviews for juniors and seniors, preparing them for the work world. I taught bible classes with modern themes and offered book clubs, etc. However, I also prepared students to lead their peers. It’s important for us as campus ministers to set up the environment for our followers to become their own leaders. We ordered curriculum, and went over it early in the week and by mid-week, they were ready and prepared to teach their peers. My theology for Campus ministry is to be a good listener to both the Spirit of the Lord and my students. What’s yours?

Grace and Peace,

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