

Student Ministry in Our Post-Christian Age

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[0 : 0 0] That makes me very embarrassed about my two bios. You know what it's like, you ask to provide a biography and you think, which life?

And so I had two. I found one. And thank you for combining my two lives together to make one. And yes, sometimes I feel like the cat with nine lives.

But what wasn't just mentioned is that I was also for many years deeply involved in St. John's and helped to run the Sunday school after Nora left.

I, Mary Ruth Wilkinson and I, ran the Sunday school, involved with Learners Exchange Women's Ministry. And so, but yes, it's true.

When I was at university in the early 70s was when I became a Christian. And one of the things I thought would be helpful as I begin this talk is actually to remind myself and you of some of the ways that the university scene has completely changed since I was a student in the early 70s.

[1 : 1 7] And I know that a few of you at least remember those days. So the, what I want to say first of all is that while I'm going to be saying many things that are negative about the university culture, I actually love universities.

I, I've worked in four universities, five if you count Regent College where I worked as an academic writing teacher. And I love universities and I love students.

And I believe that, that, that universities are incredibly beneficial in society. So when I talk about the culture, it, I'm not, I'm not talking about the kind of essence of the university.

And also I want to remind you that there are many wonderful Christians and non-Christian students at universities.

There are great professors, some of faith and some without faith. Um, and so that's the, that's the preliminary overview that I want to leave you with.

[2 : 2 3] But, um, nevertheless, uh, universities are, are interesting places these days. Uh, so when I was a student in the early seventies, the big thing that we were all looking for and talking about was truth, the pursuit of truth.

This is a, uh, uh, and from, from the very beginning, universities have been about finding the truth. Well, the sad truth about universities today is that there's no truth.

There's, um, there's, uh, your truth and my truth and everybody else's truth, but the idea of an overarching, compelling, life-changing, um, earth-shattering truth is, it's no longer believed in.

Um, and so, uh, that of course affects the whole concept of meaning, meaning of life and of purpose in life. If there's no truth, is there, can there be any meaning?

Can there be any understanding? Can there even be human relationship if there's no, no truth, no reality? So that's one, one aspect. Um, the, um, in the early seventies, uh, most of us more or less considered ourselves Christians or quasi-Christians, or we'd grown up in some sort of religious family or background.

[3 : 46] Um, and, and that was part of our, part of our identity. We probably, if pressed, would admit that we lived in a Christian society. Uh, the perception of Christians on the university campus today is not good.

Christians are actually bad. Christianity, you may be interested to know, is actually probably destroying you as human beings. Um, Christians are, first of all, most of all hypocritical.

They say one thing and do another. And there's lots of evidence for that. Be, from sex scandals to all kinds of things.

There, there is great evidence that Christians do not live what they proclaim. Uh, Christians, of course, are homophobic. Uh, we all know that, don't we?

Because we are, and, uh, and uptight about sex in general. Um, when, uh, our, our daughter Wendy was in her first year university, her professor was, um, was deliberately, uh, consciously anti-Christian.

[4 : 56] And one of the, in his, one of his tirades about Christians, he said that Christians were all uptight about sex. Um, and Wendy timidly put up her hand and said, um, my parents are Christians and they're not uptight about sex.

Um, so that, that was the beginning of my reputation at UBC. Uh, of course, we also know that Christians have been responsible for all kinds of terrible things in the past, from the, the crusades to the, um, residential school scandals.

Uh, we are racist, um, uh, evidence everywhere for that. And we're also anti-intellectual and downright stupid. That is how we are seen.

And, um, as I say, there's sadly evidence for every one of those, right? Um, the, in the, uh, in the early seventies of the big buzzword of course was freedom, freedom.

Um, and, um, freedom, um, is still a concept that is understood at the university, but it is understood, stood in terms of no, no boundaries, no moral boundaries.

[6 : 16] Uh, of course, there is the moral boundary of the law, but you can even break the law if, as long as you don't get caught. Personal, uh, freedom means there are no restrictions, restrictions on my, my behavior.

Um, one kind of interesting way that that shows up at the university is the increased, um, um, evidence for, for plagiarism.

And, um, and the, the internet is, you know, interesting doing catch up on plagiarism and then someone else breaks through that. And so if you, if you are pressed as a student in your first year history class, because you have an essay due next week and you've done nothing, done no reading, done no research, you can buy an essay on the topic of your choice written, even if you have enough money to pay for it, written specifically for you and for your professor.

So that's good to know, right? If you're a pressed student. Um, now that there is, I think the one, uh, moral boundary that many people would acknowledge is that you not hurt other people.

But even that is by your definition of hurt. Um, uh, when I talk about university campuses, I seem to always end up talking about sex.

[7 : 38] I've already mentioned it. But, um, uh, in the realm of sex on campus, uh, generally, remember I'm talking generally, um, there, again, no boundaries.

Absolutely anything is permissible as long as, um, you, again, as long as you, um, keep in mind that hurting other people can still be, can still be a problem.

But, um, there are no constraints. And beyond that, that's one thing, you know, consenting adults, that's one thing. But there's also, especially in the undergrad, there is a pervasive, um, desire, evil desire to destroy sexual innocence and, and to sexualize people.

Um, it is shocking. And, um, the other, so sex is detached from relationships.

And it is in the, it is in the context of a sport or a recreation. And the, the, um, sadly, of course, we know from, from the media that it's also now a spectator sport.

[8 : 58] So it's moved from something private between two people who had a, a deep relationship to a spectator sport. And the, the internet makes this possible.

Sadly, we've got, you know, the evidence of the, the woman in Nova Scotia who commits suicide in the U S the same thing is happening. Um, uh, so it's gang rape put on the internet, uh, sexual perversion used as a spectator sport.

Um, it is deeply sad. Um, uh, when I was at Queens, there was a, a big article in the, um, Globe and Mail. Some of you may remember it on, on hooking up, um, sex without relationship.

And they interviewed a young, a young man who said there was, he, there was a woman who, with whom he hooked up from time to time. She would phone him when she wants sex. They had sex and then they didn't see each other again until she wanted sex with him again.

And, um, they said to him, wouldn't you like to, he said, we never talk. He said, the interviewer said, well, wouldn't, wouldn't you like to get to know her? The guy said, I want to get to know her.

[10 : 10] I really like her. I want to know what she's like, but she doesn't want to know me. That is profoundly sad. So, um, I need to put my glasses on.

So, but in spite of all of this, we know, and we live in the reality that, um, we are made to have a relationship with God.

We are made to live in community. So is, um, is there no religion on campus? Well, let me tell you about the Muslim groups at UBC.

They have, um, there are many and, um, there are a lot of dedicated people. Uh, one of the things that's happened is because they pray frequently, uh, they have, um, kind of taken over the interface, interfaith, faith space at UBC and, and Christians are not welcome to pray there.

Uh, when some of my colleagues took a group of students there, uh, the men, uh, the men, men and women were praying together quietly in the corner. The women, of course, had their heads uncovered and they were asked to leave and told that they were polluting the space.

[11 : 29] Um, you know, this was brought up at several levels at UBC and, and, and nobody wants to, nobody wants to make an issue of it. Um, uh, there are, there are, there's Jewish clubs.

And of course there are many, many Christian groups, um, maybe too many. I was, uh, I was, uh, at the, um, imagine day is the day at UBC when thousands and thousands, literally, I'm not exaggerating.

I'm prone to exaggerating, but thousands of freshmen parade around the area of the campus where the clubs are, how all have their table. It's my least, the least favorite part of my job because it's always very loud and raucous and not too many grad students.

But, um, I, but nevertheless, it seems like I always managed to have one, God brings to me one significant conversation. This year was a young man from China who said, um, he said, oh, you know, I'm, I'm, well, I'm checking out the Christian groups.

When I was, he said he was a student in Saudi Arabia and he said, I, I made it a point to learn about Islam. And now that I'm here, I want to learn about Christianity.

[12 : 43] What do Christians believe? So I gave him the nutshell of what Christians believe. And he looked up and down the row. There were probably 20, 25 Christian groups.

And he said, why so many groups? And, um, so I said, well, you probably observed in Islam that people respond to their faith in different ways.

And I talked about culture and so on, but it, but I wasn't satisfied with my answer. Why so many groups? Um, but I want you to know that in the midst of the culture that I'm talking about, there are many Christian people working, uh, living for Christ, speaking for Christ, sharing the good news with people around them.

I want you to know that it's very important. Um, in the, cultures always, um, if they are not, um, or people in cultures who are not in relationship to God, that combination always results in idols.

Now in the, in biblical times, people fashioned their idols from wood and gold and precious metals. And I don't know, jewels, maybe, I don't know.

[13 : 59] But, um, today we, we, we take our ideas and we make them into idols. And I just want to talk about a few of the idols that are very common on campus.

Um, the, um, the important thing to remember about idols, I think, is that they, we make them, we, we create them, then we worship them, and then we feel frustrated because they don't give us what we thought they would.

We endue them with power. The only power they have is power that we give them. But they fail over and over again to deliver what we thought they would when we created them.

Aren't we bizarre as human beings? So, on the, I think the, probably the biggest idol is, uh, all about, uh, success.

The idol of success. And, and the, the byproduct of success, which is, um, uh, wealth, uh, privilege, power, um, security, a good life, comfort, prestige, all of those things.

[15 : 14] Um, this is still the predominant ideology at the university. And maybe that's a good thing when you think of the other possible idols that people might have. Um, and I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with academic success.

Go for it. Or, or any of the other things, uh, necessarily. Uh, but when it becomes an idol, it becomes the, the, the place where you pour all your energy and your love and your, and your, your mental abilities and your time.

Um, and of course it, it, it doesn't work in the end. Um, so at, in Kingston, I worked with a group of medical students and there was one girl I was talking to her just as she was trying to decide on her specialization.

Cause they all have to pick a specialization. And she said, I don't know. I don't know. I don't like, I don't like it. And then she just turned to me and she said, actually, I don't like medicine. And she is someone who was from, from the time she could first speak, she had been told by her parents that she was going to medical school.

That's so common in medical, medical school and law school. This is what you find parental pressure. Like you would not believe. So she had spent her whole life getting into medical school and she got there and she found that she hated it.

[16 : 33] But for her, it was the parental approval and the successful life that a medicine represented to her. And this is extremely common.

I, I remember a guy in, um, that the Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh, where they have this very, very high prestige, uh, MBA program, which costs, I don't know, 25,000 a year.

No, no, that was, um, it costs about 90,000 a year for two years, uh, for this MBA program. And so I was talking with one of the students and I said, well, what makes it so special?

What, what is the component that you're paying so much money for? He said, it has nothing to do with the content of the course. It all has to do with networking. This is the place to meet the people who are going to be successful in the future.

He was, uh, he had formed a part, a partnership with, um, uh, Chinese woman and together they were planning, um, to sell medical equipment in China.

[17 : 36] And, and that, you know, so he said the students, um, they're only here for a little bit in the week and all their weekends are on the East coast networking with other people and MBA programs in other prestigious universities.

That, that's what it was all about. Um, the, the God of materialism. Um, sometimes, um, ideologies.

Okay. So, so movements, social movements become idol, ideologies, and then they become idols. And one of those, uh, big on campus and in our society is, is the God of environmentalism.

Now, you know, good, good stewardship of the earth is a Christian value. We all know that. And, and yet it has become, uh, something for which people, into which people pour their whole being to the exclusion of all kinds of things.

And I remember it was really actually kind of funny. Uh, so I was at a church in, in, uh, Kingston and, uh, we were cleaning up after a student breakfast. And one of the women, a godly, uh, church woman who, um, for them and this breakfast for students has been going on for over 35 years, um, at an Anglican church in Kingston.

[18 : 57] And this godly woman who'd probably been there from the very first, uh, uh, of those breakfasts, uh, came up to me and she said, um, what, why aren't you teaching your, your students about sex?

I said, um, um, um, um, well, actually, you know, we do. And, uh, and that's something that we talk about a lot. And, and, and she said, well, this girl, and she told me her name is, is, um, is sleeping with her boyfriend.

And, uh, and, and, you know, you need to do something about it. Uh, and then, uh, about three or four minutes later, the girl who was also cleaning up came over to me and said, she, she was carrying a styrofoam cup in her hand.

And she said, Susan, you've got to do something about this church. They are using styrofoam cups. So, and so, um, uh, yeah, it was a problem.

Uh, and it was, um, it was one of those interesting problems I encounter all the time, different ideologies going on here. Um, the thing about something like hyper environmentalism is that it allows people to feel morally good.

[20 : 19] I am doing something about this terrible problem. I'm actually contributing to saving the planet. Meanwhile, their entire life can be, uh, immoral chaos.

And they don't see any discrepancy between those two things. The same thing is true of the, um, passion, good passion for social justice in the world.

This is tremendously important. And I think that some of the Christians of the younger generations are discovering this as a moral imperative that maybe some of us missed.

Um, but again, it has become an idol. And so you pour yourself into that instead of into your relationship with God and into your relationship with, with the people around you.

Not, it's not wrong. It's not bad, but it's being, become an idol. Um, and science is not a new idol, as you all know.

[21 : 23] Um, but, uh, the interesting thing I find about science is that it's, um, offshoot, if you like, technology has become the idol.

So, uh, the science in the sense of, um, discovering the natural world, I don't know. Some of you are scientists and I may be wrong, but it seems to me that that's maybe less of an idol than it used to be, although it is still looked to, to solve all our problems.

But technology has become the, um, the, the contemporary idol of many students. Um, now, again, technology is good.

When you, uh, go to the hospital for major surgery, you're pretty thankful for all the medical technology. And I'm thankful for, for, uh, social media.

Um, as, uh, you know, two of our sons live in Toronto and, um, don't call as often as maybe we would like, but email is, um, always there.

[22 : 27] And, um, I'm on Facebook reluctantly because students, uh, uh, communicate that way. Um, and, um, the, and the grad group has a Facebook page.

But one of the things that I found interesting about, about it is that, um, technology allows us to have what people think of as really deep, profound, meaningful relationships without actually being deep, profound, or meaningful.

Um, so, uh, I might find out what someone in Halifax has just had for breakfast, which is probably more information than I ever wanted to know.

Uh, and that person might think, ah, Susan in Vancouver, she's my friend on Facebook. Uh, but in fact, there's no, uh, communication other than me.

Like, I send out anything I want to know about, uh, and one thing I think other people want to know about my life, which is probably not nearly as much as I think they want to know, and, and feel that there's some kind of relationship.

[23 : 35] But it, it is, I'm not saying it's meaningless. I'm not saying it's always empty, but I'm saying it's inadequate. It's inadequate. And yet technology allows us to think that we are creating community.

Interestingly, on the Facebook, the grad student Facebook page, there are now 50 people on the Facebook page. Some of them are former students. Some of them are current students. Some of them are just interested, maybe a few inter-varsity staff, whatever.

Uh, but there are some students who are members of the Facebook page who I have never met. None of the students have ever met. So, uh, occasionally I send, I email people and I say, oh, you know, we're friends, uh, or we're on the same Facebook page.

I'd love to tell you more about the group. I'd love to meet with you. I'll buy you lunch. Uh, and I don't hear from them. And my theory, and I've talked to several people about this and they say, you're probably right, is that they are from Christian families.

Their parents are onto them all the time. Are you part of a Christian group? Are you involved with Christians? Oh yeah, I'm on this. I'm in the grad group at UBC. It's great. You know, you check out our Facebook page.

[24 : 46] There's their picture. And here are all our activities, posts, you know, retreats and Bible studies and dinners and you name it, we're doing it. And, ah, they're parents.

They're thrilled. I hope when they come to graduation, they don't want to meet us. Um, so, um, anyway, idols, idols, idols.

And then I've already mentioned the idol of sex. Um, uh, but the other thing I want to mention more broadly about sex is that it has actually become, it's no longer something that you do.

It is something that you are. So sex is now morphed into sexual identity. And that's, that's a huge shift that has enormous implications.

And it's worth going into in greater detail. I'm not going to do that because I'm, I'm not an expert on sex. But, um, when we define ourselves by sexuality, we are so narrowing and limiting ourselves that we are shutting off whole other areas of, of being, of being human, of, of being part of this world that we live in.

- [26 : 03] And, um, so purpose and meaning come through sexual identity. And that's a problem. And the God of sex completely fails to deliver what he promises, which is relationship. People do still know somewhere in their being that they are created for relationship. And sex offers a physical momentary relationship that is completely inadequate to meet our human need for community and belonging.
- So, um, the end result of all these idols is first of all, confusion. Um, there, there is deep confusion about what is, uh, real and what is unreal.
- What is, um, helpful and what is unhelpful. Um, uh, uh, again, it, it plays out in, in things like friendship.
- In, um, in understanding the nature of things. Is this true? Is this real? Is this real? There's also enormous frustration because, as I said, the idols are failing all over the place.
- [27 : 40] They can't deliver. When you think of, um, the, um, God of science who promises, uh, health and, uh, and well-being and a good life.
- And yet, uh, we still die. And our bodies return to the dust from which we were made. Uh, the gods fail all over the place. There's also, beyond, uh, frustration and confusion, there's a sense of futility.
- Of course. That's the end result of all of these, uh, idol worships. Um, and, um, now, futility and meaningless. Now, when I, when I talk to students, when I engage with students, I, I, I feel that quite often this sense of futility is very deeply buried.
- It is there. And, uh, it is masked by all kinds of things. Um, and yet, I think that behind the, um, the unbelievable overconsumption of alcohol, uh, beyond the inappropriate use of sex, beyond the, um, drive.
- For, um, for, um, academic success and materialism. There, there is often a feeling of futility. And that, sadly, um, results in suicide.
- [29 : 10] It results in deep depression. Um, it, it, uh, it comes out in many ways. Um, so, you just need to dig a little bit, uh, deeply.
- And you find it there. So, in, in the face of all this, uh, what, what does student ministry offer? Well, um, we've been, um, we've been studying the book of Colossians for the last little while.
- And, um, I, I thought about that. These words came to my mind as I was preparing this talk. Um, we offer over and over again the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.
- The Father, Paul writes, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.
- That's the Father. And the Son. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.
- [30 : 42] He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.
- For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.
- The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The giver of life. The comforter. The one who convicts of sin and then leads people into the truth of salvation and the living water that Jesus offers.

So that's what we are offering over and over again as we work on the campus. Now, the question that I ask myself at least every week, if not every day, and often in the middle of the night, is how can I do that?

How can I do that effectively? And that's what all Christian groups are struggling to discover, to discern. How can we offer the Lord Jesus in the darkness on the campus?

[32 : 07] And one of the things that has helped in Tavarsity's recent discussion of these things, we've been discussing it for however many years we've been on campuses, is a survey that was commissioned very recently by a number of Christian organizations, particularly those working with youth.

And it's a very well-conducted survey, over 2,000 people. The question was, it's called Hemorrhaging Faith.

And it's interviewing people in their 20s and 30s who grew up in a Christian home, grew up in a church, and why they have or have not left the church.

And as those of us who work with people in that age bracket know, so many leave the church. And I know that is not as much a problem at St. John's as it is in many churches, but it's deeply, deeply concerning churches and student organizations.

And this survey has helped us to look at what we do and to say, oh, well, you know, this is good. This is apparently effective, because we're not always sure.

[33 : 40] This, we need to look at that. So that is shaping our thinking at the moment. There are some excellent books. One is called I Once Was Lost.

I talk about it all the time, because, again, it's based on the real experiences of students. Somewhere in the mid-90s, and this is really when post-modern philosophy started to grasp hold of university, some disciplines in the university, Christian staff workers began to realize that the things that they had done for so many years were no longer effective.

What I call classic apologetics. Was God, was Jesus mad, bad, or God? Is the New Testament true? What is the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus?

All of these important questions that were part of my coming to faith and growing in faith, they just, nobody's interested. So, no, that's not true.

Not everybody is. A few people are still interested. Interestingly, the dividing line of whether people are interested in those things or not is often where they grew up. If they grew up in Western, particularly North American culture, they're not interested.

[34 : 57] If they grew up in another culture, they're a lot more likely to be interested. Scientists are more, people in science are much more interested to be, likely to be interested in those questions than students in the arts.

It's very interesting. Anyway, and this, so again, this book looks at students who have, in the 90s, who did make that switch to belief, and it lays out some of the factors that helped them come to faith.

Interestingly, the first factor is that they learn to trust a Christian. People, going back to what I said about Christians' reputation on campus. Who could trust a hypocrite, homophobic, whatever, whatever.

People learn to trust Christians by getting to know them. And then helping them to become curious about Jesus. This is not necessarily mentioning church right away, and not necessarily inviting them to church right away.

Helping people to develop a relationship with a believer, and then eventually a group of believers, a church or a student group. And then helping them to move to faith in Jesus.

[36 : 16] It's a book I would recommend. So here are some of the things that I do, that other Christian staff, people working on campus do, that we feel are effective, and are the way forward for us right now to bring Jesus to the students.

First of all, Christian community is extremely important. People are hungry for community. All that I said about Facebook and Facebook friends doesn't satisfy the need for community.

And people want to be part of a loving group of people who are committed to one another. Our community group meeting is a Monday night.

It's a dinner followed by a Bible study. And within that, we encourage people to live lives of holiness, pursuing God.

It's a prayerful community. One of the things that the Hemorrhaging Faith Report identified is that for people who have left the church, often they have not had any experience of answered prayer.

[37 : 34] So the prayer that was part of their childhood church experience was never seen to be answered. And it's in, we know, I mean, it's in a small group of people, a community of people, where week after week as we pray for one another, we see how God has answered our prayers.

Not always yes, but always answered in some way. And of course, for me, Bible study is a key component of Christian community.

And Bible study, that allows people to ask questions, to express doubts, to not always be told what the passage says and what they should believe about it.

To, as a community, come to understand the meaning of the study that we are doing. On campus, we try to provide places, spaces, where Christians and non-Christians can come together and look at a topic in an atmosphere of respect, of mutual respect, and of genuine interest in learning and getting to know one another and looking at a topic.

The most, okay, so I'll just tell you about one such opportunity that I worked on a year ago. So we asked one of the people at the International Justice Mission to come and speak on campus.

[39 : 12] And we framed it as a question, does Jesus care about justice? So we put out lots and lots of publicity.

And we had two different opportunities. One was at the law school, where they should be interested in justice, right? Two of the students from our grad group, who were both law students, worked very, very hard to invite people, to let it be known, to say this is something that we need to hear.

And over 75 students came. The room was barely big enough. They consumed huge amounts of pizza and engaged with the topic.

One of the law professors who had not acknowledged that he was a Christian before, you know, sort of it wasn't generally known that he was, was part of the panel that we created to address this issue because he works on human slavery issues.

And he told the students that he had been, that the Christian group in that, in his law school had been very important in his life.

[40 : 30] And the students were thrilled. They didn't know that. So then we had also had an afternoon session for the, generally for the university. Part of the publicity.

But there were no students who were going out there saying, this is important, you know, come, come, come. And only about 20 people came. It was okay.

We had a great time. But it was not widely received. And the difference being those invitational students at the law school. That's what made, in my thinking, that's what made the difference.

But the other thing about that night, or those two events, is asking a question and then addressing it as a question, not assuming that the answer is already in the question.

When I did my master's thesis on Jesus as an adult educator, one of the things that's so striking about Jesus' teaching strategies is his use of questions.

[41 : 35] He asks questions all the time. And then he actually listens to the answer, which is even more amazing. Things like retreats.

A lot of students in the hemorrhaging faith report indicated that weekends away, camps have been very significant for them in their decision to follow Jesus.

I'm leaving on Thursday for a week-long camp on Thetis Island. I'd love for you to pray for me. So we are inter-varsity, undergrad, grad, here at UBC, Simon Fraser, Emily Carr, and UVic.

We are taking 91 students to Thetis Island for a week-long camp of seven hours a day Bible study. Can you imagine signing up for seven hours a day Bible study?

I'm a staff, and I'm wondering if I can get through. I did last year. I will again. And again, the amount of work that has gone into encouraging those students to come.

[42 : 46] I went last year. We had 54 students. This year we have 91. It's an amazing week. And it's done across the country in several, four or five different locations.

And it's a time for people to experience that time away, that Christian community, the word of God, seeing people pray who actually believe that they're talking to someone, and together creating Christian community for a week.

It's pretty exciting. On campus, we do things like proxies, which are kind of setting up a display in a public area, again, asking a question.

And the idea is not to give people the complete gospel as they walk by, but to begin to engage people in questions that everybody's asking.

What is good? Where will I go when I die? The kind of human questions that people ask. In the grad group, we have pub nights where we throw out a question and try to gather people together to talk.

[44 : 03] And again, it's forming relationships. Finally, student ministry, and this is a theme. When I talk to my fellow staff and myself, in the middle of the night, I talk to myself about my ministry.

What it is all about in the end is loving others and loving the university as God loves us. And that love is unconditional, it's sacrificial, and it's incarnational.

That's what it's all about. I'm just going to tell you one story. So first term, one of the medical students emailed me and said, I'm looking for a really rad Christian group.

And I thought, oh my goodness, he probably won't come to us. But I invited him and he came. And he is a very lovely, dedicated, committed Christian man who is in the Northern Medicine Program, which trains people for medicine in remote areas.

He wants to be a missionary. And his name is Caleb. And he was just a great member of our group. And he asked us to pray for his roommate, Sam.

[45 : 23] And he was always asking Sam to come to the group. And I got more than one text. You know, I'm there stirring the spaghetti sauce and I get a text on my phone.

Hey, it's Caleb. Pray for Sam. He said he's coming tonight. You know, Caleb is very excited. So Sam never came. Caleb is now at this term.

He's up at UNBC in Prince George. I visited him the other week when I was up there supervising staff. He's doing really well. But anyway, so he was no longer Sam's roommate.

But Sam, on his own, somewhere in February, emailed us and said, could he come to the grad group? So he came. And the thing that was so impressive about him was that he really got into the Bible study.

And he was answering the questions. You know what it's like. Group of Christians. Oh, been there, done that. The scripture's not very exciting. Oh, another question. Sam was really engaging with the scripture.

[46 : 26] But not, it seemed, from a point of view of faith. Anyway, so all of a sudden, after a week or two, two or three weeks of this, he emailed one of the, the woman who works with me, Erin, and said that he wanted to talk.

And so he comes from a Catholic background. He is, he gave that up. He investigated other religions, particularly Eastern religions.

He's in Asian studies. He went to Japan. And while he was in Japan, he became a Buddhist. And then came back to UBC and had Caleb as his roommate. So anyway, he said that he had become disillusioned with Buddhism.

And, and that's why he was investigating Christianity. And so he said he was working on his computer one night. This is when God uses technology.

And, you know, pop-ups come, you know, you don't, they're random. And they, where do they come from? Anyway, a pop-up came in his computer. And it was, it was the Lord's Prayer.

[47 : 37] Now, did you know there are pop-ups? Anyway, how did this happen? So Sam started reading the Lord's Prayer. And as he read it, he realized that he was praying to the Lord God Almighty in whom he believed.

So now Sam is off again to Asia again. We only had him for a very short time. We sent him off in God's hands with the loving care of the Father.

But then I also have to tell you, lest you think it's all success, another young man who we've, who comes, has come for two years to the Bible study group.

I've had umpteen lunches with him, talking about things. Ed has taken him out for lunch. Aaron has taken him out for lunch. And he seems further away than ever, more confused than ever.

He's looking for a miracle. And we tell him the fact that he's alive and interacting because of his medical condition.

[48 : 48] That's a miracle. He doesn't believe us. He's looking for the big miracle. So on we go with prayer and hope and joy.

And we ask God to bless us and to bless the students and to bless the university and to bless the faculty and to reach into the darkness and transfer many people into the kingdom of his beloved son.

so.