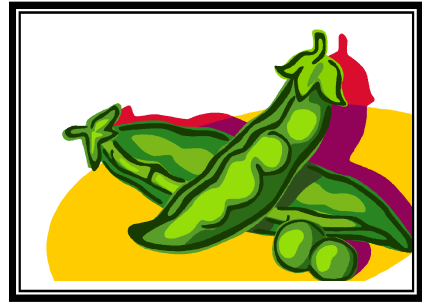


1. A CAMPUS WITH NO WITNESS?

"Imagine a campus with no corporate Christian witness: The few isolated Christians never got their act together - or maybe did not discover each other. What would you do? What would you like to see happen?"



The first thing, of course, would be to pray - that 'the Lord of the Harvest would send out workers' (Matthew 9:38). But what would you pray for those workers to do? Surely, to get together to present Christ to their lost peers.

The New Testament (NT) is strong on unity in the truth of the gospel, so you would want the witness to have a clear biblical foundation and focus on the 'things of first importance'. The NT is equally strong against party spirit or splits on secondary issues (1 Cor 15:3-4; 1:10-17).

So how might Christian witness on campus start? The NT points to the church as God's instrument for witness. Say if we were in the University of (first century) Ephesus. The testimony in the campus then would have come from the church, or at least its students. Today, some might argue that churches should take their witness onto campus today. Well, they should certainly pray for and encourage students, as students should pray for and support their local church.

But our situation differs from the New Testament. Imagine if all the churches in a university town moved into that campus. If they work together they could produce a united (i.e. interdenominational) testimony. If they did not, the result would be a ministry that distinguishes one church from another, rather than the church from the world. The outcome would please only the enemy.

It would scarcely be effective witness for Baptist and Pentecostals, Anglicans and Charismatics to appear as separate groups on campus. Such diversity might be postmodern, but it would look like consumerism and competition.

Churches can achieve a united witness to students in a similar way to how they can affect the work place. This is partly by teaching their members how to live in the world (e.g. Col 3:18-4:1) and partly by scattering their individual members into all areas of society.

The church is not meant to have a corporate presence in the work place. It is not parachurch talk to say that; it is the church functioning as the church. It does not always have to function corporately in order to function biblically.

Similarly a church does not have to have a formal presence on campus in order to fulfil its responsibility to the campus. The members can be the church where organised church itself cannot go. As they do this, they will meet members of other churches and be able to establish a united, cross-church witness that sets secondary issues aside. The NT's call for unity in the truth leads to an interdenominational or non-partisan approach.

As to who should be responsible for campus witness, the NT gives us the principle of peer witness: Jews to Jews, the weak to the weak, colleague to colleague at work...and so on 'to win as many as possible' (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Students are called to reach students, as they come alongside each other and share their world. This, of course, has practical advantages too, when university authorities are increasingly suspicious of churches or off-campus groups, but accept student-led societies. And in all this students are supported by full-time UCCF staff and Relay Workers dedicated to particular CFs.

So where does this lead us, as we imagine that campus with no corporate witness? It gives us this VISION.

- ✂ PRAYER, by students and for students
- ✂ A FOUNDATION that is clearly biblical
- ✂ EVANGELISM: a united witness to the Gospel as students take responsibility to reach students
- ✂ Growth: students studying the Bible together, living it out and relating it to their studies/world
- ✂ CHURCHES supporting students in their on-campus witness
- ✂ FELLOWSHIP that is cross-church and trans-denominational rather than fragmented

All of which more or less describe the reason for establishing Christian Fellowships in campuses.

It is quite a vision, with consequences that touched the whole globe. It was articulated by a student, Norman Grubb, as far back as 1919: *'It was in the Michaelmas term that God gave me a clear vision of (Christian Union movement) that was to be. I saw that not only must there be this witness in every university but that God was going to do it'.*

God has indeed been doing it ever since and still is today, here and in over 140 other countries.

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**UCCF is University and Colleges Christian Fellowship. UCCF is the student movement organisation in UK affiliated with IFES.*