

Open Your Eyes To The Campus

“All I need is another thing to do.”

By Barry St. Clair

As Gary and I talked over breakfast, I could sense that he had something more on his mind. A sharp youth leader who had served five years at a medium-sized, fast-growing church, Gary expressed frustration. “Something is missing. I have worked with some of the best students around. I have seen God do some tremendous things in my life and in the lives around me. But for the past six months I have been plagued with the question, ‘is what I’m doing really making an impact for Jesus Christ?’”

Youth leaders stay on the job an average of eighteen to twenty-four months. Many go to another church or “grow up and get a real job.” They leave youth ministry for various reasons, but usually it’s because they lack that burning purpose and direction that won’t let them quit.

Purpose helps us know that what we do has value. It tells us, “You’re using your life wisely.” Direction gives us a sense of moving ahead. In youth ministry we can take many different directions, but all roads lead to Jesus Christ. Our purpose and direction has the focus of challenging young people to allow Jesus Christ to change their lives radically.

Most youth workers profess that their work is a noble calling. Standing in the gap, sacrificing our lives for students is the kind of work Jesus would do. But after we conduct our 300th youth meeting, endure our 20th lock-in, get stood up by the same student six times, and watch our houses get rolled every month just before it rains, we start to question our calling. We wonder if working in a sporting goods store would really be so bad. “Maybe all those people were right; maybe I do need to get a “real job” after all. Perhaps I should grow up and become part of the real world.”

My friend Gary had come to this point. He expressed a longing to do more than serve as a glorified baby-sitter. He wanted to make an impact on the non-believing world for Jesus Christ. Gary discovered that 90 percent of all school-age children get their education in public schools. The vast majority of these students do not know Jesus Christ. Most will never experience His love or hear the gospel unless someone goes to them. When Gary realized this, the lights came on. He knew his calling was to go!

Right now, you may be thinking, “Oh great, all I need is another responsibility to add to the thousand I have already.” We agree that many good things can fill our calendars. But just because we’re busy doesn’t mean we’re effective.

To get a clear perspective on our ministry purpose and direction, let’s look at Jesus’ pattern of ministry as recorded in Matthew 9:35-38:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were *harassed* and *helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of

the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:35-38, italics mine)

In that passage Jesus provides us with compelling reasons as to why we must go to the campus today.

Jesus went

In Matthew 9:35, we see that; Jesus went to all the towns and villages.” Clearly, Jesus moved toward people; He did not expect people to come to Him. He deliberately chose a “go and tell” approach rather than a passive, laid-back “come and see” strategy. Like Jesus, we need that same “go and tell” approach. That way we will see “crowds” of people everywhere (vs.36). Because Jesus loved people, He went to them. He calls us to do the same.

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If you struggle with going, ask the Lord to do in you what He did with one youth leader. John had seen his youth group grow from six to one hundred students. One day, while meeting with his pastor, John bragged about all of the students he had brought into the youth group. Sensing his pride the wise pastor said, “I’d like to show you something”. They got into his car, drove to the local high school, and parked near the front entrance. The pastor instructed John to sit quietly and listen. All he could hear was the wind whispering softly through the trees and a few birds chirping in the distance. Suddenly, a ringing bell rudely interrupted the quietness. It was followed by the noise of hundreds of students walking out the front entrance of the school. The two men watched and listened. Some students came out laughing, but one was crying. Others talked with friends but many walked alone. Lots of them yelled and screamed, and even a few cursed in anger, but others moved along quietly, not saying a word. Some acted arrogantly, while several showed fear. What they all had in common was a noticeable lack of purpose. They walked out the door without a clue about who to follow or where to go. For John, the picture his pastor painted for him that day was worth more than 10,000 words.

If we have not taken the gospel to the campus, we have come up short in fulfilling the mission that Jesus has given us, no matter how many students may come to the youth group. We must go because Jesus went.

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