

Celebration of Completion

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS | WEEK SIX

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CELEBRATION OF COMPLETION

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Large group meetings can be inspiring, motivating, and instructing. They allow for great diversity but can cause a spectator mentality in the audience. It is difficult to meet the needs of the target audience consistently, and very few speakers can communicate to large groups effectively.

Small groups get us closer to the goals of community: getting people closer to one another and God, disclosing their real needs, and aiding in each other's growth. It is harder to hide in a small group and it can encourage a sense of accountability and responsibility to one other. The four key elements of these groups are care, growth, training, and vision. Entry level groups can focus on meeting needs of new folks that attend while a leadership group of committed students can focus on the overarching task of outreach into the broader community.

One-on-one mentoring focuses on application and accountability. There are a range of mentoring styles from time intensive and highly structured to informal or passive. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Christians are called to invest in others who will also be able to teach. This strategy enables movements to be built.

Disciple-making communities requires authenticity, reflection, and focused questions:

What kind of person is our community trying to produce?

What does our community need to be like in order to help produce that kind of person?

What kind of leadership helps to produces that kind of community?

Three metaphors describe the authentic leader in these communities:

Model - Jesus called disciples to FOLLOW HIM. (see 2 Tim 3:10-14)

Coach - Imparts skills (fundamentals) to those who wants to learn. (see 2 Tim 1:13,14)

Parent - Emphasizes nurturing grace and long-term perseverance (see Deut. 6:5-9, 2 Thess 2:7-12)

We know that only God's Spirit can move an individual to a transformed, mature life.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to you to be fully forgiven and accepted in Christ?
2. What strengths, gifts, or passions would you most want to bring to the group? How does that spring from the way you see God calling you?
3. Knowing that we are dependent on Christ to transform us, what area would you most want to Him work on in your life? How can the group make this a safe place to share these things?

4. How can we encourage others to find their place in our ministry? Is there someone you would like to invite to the Fellowship?
5. Where do you see a spiritual battle among graduate students on campus?
6. What one idea do you feel could make a difference in drawing and transforming graduate students in the group?

WHO IS GRAD RESOURCES?

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In an effort to understand and serve the 2.5 million graduate students in America, Grad Resources commissioned the Barna Research Group to conduct a national study on the lifestyle and struggles of graduate students. Armed with new data and insight Grad Resources was launched as a faith-based service organization addressing the personal and spiritual needs of these future leaders.

Our website, www.gradresources.org, has become a global resource for students seeking more information about specific topics related to graduate student life. We hold seminars across the country on time management and achieving a balanced life. Our distance mentoring program provides opportunities for graduate students to connect with peers dealing with the same issues. To give hope to those in despair, the National Grad Crisis Line makes life-saving help available at all hours of the day for free. These quality of life resources serve the entire graduate student population unconditionally.

To those who are interested, we offer an opportunity to dialog about questions of faith and the role of spiritual formation in their lives. Christian graduate students and faculty host regular discussions concerning the integration of the Christian faith and academics. These local, student-led community groups are part of a network under Grad Resources called The Fellowship of Christian Grads.

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

Grad Resources understands that while all believers need to be part of a local church, Christian graduate students value connections with like-minded peers who understand the academic world and know what it takes to flourish spiritually in the university. We also know that time is limited and that teams of student leaders are best able to share responsibilities and provide the greatest stability and variety for developing Christian scholars through the local group. Therefore, Grad Resources helps to launch and sustain these supportive, faith based groups by organizing teams of leaders. We provide curriculum, coaching, funding and an annual Leadership Summit for all of our student leaders. We try to ensure that you won't be alone as a believer in graduate school or as a leader in guiding a local Fellowship.

TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

Find out more about our services to graduate students at www.gradresources.org.

Check out the Fellowship of Christian Grads at www.christiangrads.org.

Learn more about our leadership structure at www.christiangrads.org/leaders.

Begin the conversation about launching a new Fellowship by emailing community@gradresources.org.

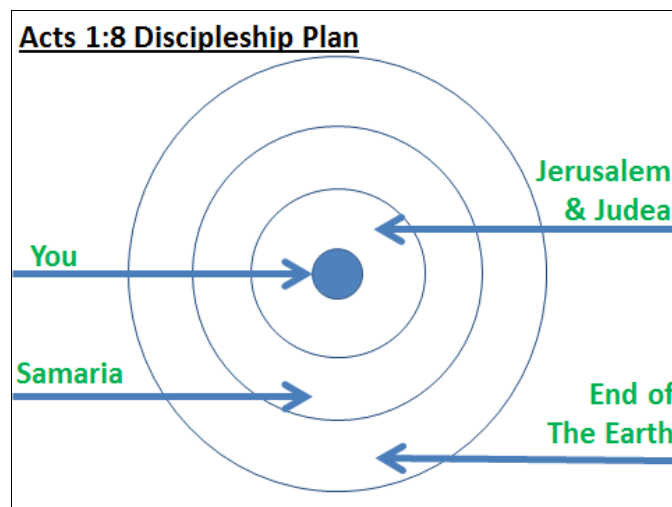
ACTS 1:8 DISCIPLESHIP VISION

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After Jesus completed his mission, the redemption of man through His death and resurrection, we find him giving his final instructions to his disciples before ascending back into heaven. In Acts 1 his marching orders are powerfully encapsulated in this single verse.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” - Acts 1:8

This command was not just for his original disciples but for anyone who claims to love and serve him. In this verse, Jesus calls us to be Spirit-led witnesses in the world. But what does it look like for a professor or graduate student to take up this calling in his or her life? Jesus speaks of the coming power of the Holy Spirit for his disciples and then promises Kingdom impact, from their current residence (Jerusalem) into the surrounding regions (Judea and Samaria), and eventually to the ends of the earth. This is what true discipleship looks like.



IT STARTS WITH YOU

True discipleship begins with a transformed heart but this can't be accomplished by our own efforts. Notice the way Paul commands the Romans to worship.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper

worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**" - Romans 12:1-2

Paul encourages them to surrender their entire existence to God as an act of worship and then encourages them to *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Notice the passive voice in these verbs. Rather than commanding them to transform themselves, he is asking that they surrender everything to Christ who then transforms their lives.

The process of spiritual growth and personal discipleship is initiated by God through the power of the Holy Spirit. No amount of spiritual devotion or religious activity can make a person a witness for Christ outside of a transforming relationship with Him. It requires the surrender of our desires and dependence on His grace. This is why Jesus promises his disciples power when the Holy Spirit breaks into their lives. He is the beginning and source of spiritual growth.

Secure and Sealed in Him

This Spirit-led transformation begins with the understanding that your salvation is secure in Him. Graduate students are faced with insurmountable pressures to perform academically and please their advisors. It's easy to carry this burden of performance into our spiritual lives but Jesus has guaranteed our salvation through His work on the cross. It is a free gift that requires no further effort by you to remain under His grace. In other words, you are spiritually set free as you walk with and serve Him. This is foundational to our Christian faith.

Free to Dance

Though we are covered by God's grace through Jesus' death, we often try to live for him by our own efforts. The result is often a sense of failure and guilt. Furthermore, we become a poor model to others of our true freedom in Christ. He has called us to experience his grace on a daily basis, acknowledging his forgiveness and drawing on his power as we seek to live and serve him. Living in this position of eternal security and abundant grace allows us to be set free from the rigid march of performance. Rather, we get to experience the Christian life as a dance while enjoying his power, peace, and rest. Graduate students relating to Jesus in this way will be an attractive contrast to the world of academic performance.

Called to a Mission

After Paul encourages the Ephesians with this free gift of grace, he exhorts them to "walk in the good works already prepared for you (Eph. 2:8-10)." As you prepare for your future occupation, realize that each of us is called to be part of a Kingdom mission. Acts 1:8 indicates that Jesus wants all of us to be his witnesses to the world, and will provide us the necessary power.

Jerusalem & Judea

For the apostles, the call to be Christ's witnesses began at home – in Jerusalem and the surrounding regions of Judea. For us, this means consciously seeking to glorify God in our current spheres of influence. You can make the greatest impact on the people you interact with daily – your classmates, research partners, roommates, and advisors. By faithfully imitating Christ within the context of your daily reach, you'll make a lasting impact on your fellow graduate students and faculty advisors.

Samaria

The Samaritans were a hated race within the Jewish community. Jews would commonly travel around the region just to avoid contact with them while on their way home to Judea. Jesus delivers this point by highlighting the *good* Samaritan as the least likely person to aid the one who hated him.

While ministering within their comfort zones made sense, this command to be witnesses in Samaria would have come as a serious challenge. As Christians, our “Samaria” might be the segments of society where mutual animosity exists. Unfortunately, your academic discipline could be that place. Some scholars see Christianity as an unreasonable belief and believers as anti-intellectual. **For you**, it may feel like hostile territory but it presents an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ.

As a Christian graduate student, you stand in the middle. You’re the bridge between the two worlds and you possess a unique opportunity to show the university and the Church that faith and reason mutually uplift each other – that the two can be integrated.

The Ends of the Earth

Finally, the command to be Christ’s witness extends to all corners of the globe. As a graduate student and future expert in your field, you have the potential to speak into the lives of global leaders or develop the research that undergirds our understanding of the world for decades to come. The passions, opportunities, and talents that have brought you to this place will open doors for you to impact the world like so few ever will.

YOUR POTENTIAL IN CHRIST

You are secure in Christ, free to “dance in grace,” and called to be part of the Kingdom Mission. As a graduate student, you have the unique opportunity to reach your Jerusalem, Samaria, and the world within the framework of your research and studies. Here are three qualities for effective grad ministry.

Becoming a Shepherd

One of the most common pictures of Jesus is that of a shepherd. Shepherds faithfully tend to the needs of their flocks while guiding them in the direction he wishes to take them. Graduate students often feel isolated and alone. Sadly, it’s just as true among Christian graduate students. A great way to be Jesus’ witness is by gathering and meeting the needs of other believers around you.

Christian community is a fundamental distinctive of Grad Resources. Our Fellowship of Christian Grads, an international network of local Christian communities, is led by graduate students who have embraced the calling to shepherd others around them. They develop missional Christian communities that study the integration of faith and academics while reaching out to their campuses by introducing them to Grad Resources’ services and, more importantly, the Gospel!

Becoming a Warrior

For many Christians, the academic world can feel like an alien land. In order to be effective witnesses of Jesus, Christian graduate students are called to be warriors in the battle for the Christian message in the academy. Dr. Dallas Willard argues that the primary battle for the Gospel message lies in the way religious truth is classified in academic settings.

“The removal of the basic Christian teaching from the domain of knowledge means that those who represent such teaching, and who accept them, lose their rights and

responsibilities, ... and they become caretakers of the tradition and propagandists. Those who are spokespeople for Christ have to abandon that position of simply representing a tradition and being propagandists for something that they want people to do or to believe and move into the area of common ground where the assumption is that there is knowledge of the basic points of Christian teaching.”

We need to be intellectual warriors who are ready to confront the perceptions of the Gospel among academes. Becoming a faithful warrior means being prepared in and out of season. Within the Fellowship of Christian Grads, Grad Resources emphasizes the importance of remaining vigilant as a warrior by practicing the disciplines of Bible study and prayer.

Becoming a Diagnostician

Finally, we must learn to be good diagnosticians. Luke 5 tells us the story of a band of individuals who were determined to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus. With crowds pressing on all the openings to the building, the friends resorted to removing the roof above Jesus to lower their friend down to him. This same determined, out-of-the-box thinking is often required of us when sharing the Gospel with the academic community.

Grad Resources reaches out to the broader campus through our various services, Christian faculty lectures, and many other avenues. By meeting the personal and emotional needs of the academic community, doors open for us to minister to their spiritual needs as well.

Wherever you are in the process of growing as a disciple and witness of Christ, we want to help you in your journey.