

# A Response

By Don Gurney

This response is going to be couched in the “bad news”—“good news” approach. My first response to the presentation at New Orleans was that it was all bad news. It seemed to me that Dr. Duncan was saying that there is simply no way that campus ministers are going to be able to minister to faculty members. A closer look reveals that while he was not very optimistic, he does set forth some worthy goals we can attempt in our ministry to faculty.

The bad news is set forth in five serious obstacles that Dr. Duncan sees as standing in the way of ministry to faculty. I will list them very briefly and then respond to them:

1. Obstacle of time—simply not enough time to work with students and faculty.
2. Obstacle of identification with students only.
3. Obstacle of lack of acceptance into the faculty circle.
4. Obstacle of “natural prejudice” carried by many of the academic community against religious institutions or religious groups.
5. Obstacle of a very busy faculty that limits opportunity to minister to them.

My response to these five obstacles is that, yes, they are very much present in the ministry of nearly every campus minister I know. However, obstacles can be seen in two ways. They are something that is going to stop us or something that we can work toward overcoming. I would choose to see the obstacles as a challenge that we can honestly face and work toward overcoming in our own ministries. For example, a campus minister can use the obstacle of time and of being identified with students only. One of my best ministries to faculty has been to capitalize on the idea that I am close to the students and can help faculty get closer and understand students better through closer involvement. I enlist the faculty to help in retreats, special studies, and many other student oriented activities. By doing this I have ministered to the faculty, come to know the faculty better, and made better use of my limited time.

The good news is that there is a real need for ministry to faculty in the schools where we serve. Dr. Duncan says it in these words, "When all of this is said and done, it is still true that there are many faculty members who are in dire need of spiritual and emotional help, often unwilling to recognize this even to themselves. They become your challenge." He goes on to suggest goals we can work toward in our ministry to faculty members. They are worthy of serious consideration:

1. Continue to improve your own mind and your academic credentials.
2. Become aware of the faculty members who are having difficulties in their lives. Choose two or three as your challenge.
3. Simply begin a small ministry to two or three faculty members. Do this in love, conscientiously, persistently, tactfully, and expertly.

Again my response to this good news is that what has been said here is true in the ministries of nearly every campus minister I know. There are things we can do to be better prepared to minister to faculty members. There are those faculty members who are hurting, and we need to stay aware and sensitive to their needs. Too many of us are waiting on the "big ministry" to happen and miss out on beginning something small with needy faculty members.

In conclusion, I want to make an appeal. To other campus ministers I would appeal to you that we get our house in order and begin to change our image on campus. Let's not hide in the woodwork of "BSU activities" and miss opportunities of other important ministries. To state directors I would appeal to you to recognize the vital importance of the ministry to faculty on the local campus and somehow let this reflect in report forms and goal setting. To school administrators, especially those in Baptist schools, I would appeal to you to help us change our image on campus from someone equipped and interested only in helping students to someone with something to say to the whole campus, including faculty. Help us change the image by making the position of campus minister equal to any other faculty member in academic credentials, in searching for the right person for the job, and in recognition that the campus minister has a great deal to offer to the school, both to students and to faculty.

We all can have a part in overcoming the obstacles that Dr. Duncan listed that do stand in the way of ministry to faculty. Most of these obstacles are there because of the "mind set" of school administration and faculty, of the campus ministers themselves, and of those who supervise campus ministers. It can be changed if we all work on it together. It seems to me that Baptist schools should be the place to begin the change. Can we change? Or are we locked into this pattern forever?