

Three Models for Campus Discipleship

1. DISCIPLING STUDENTS IN A BALANCED BSU PROGRAM

By Robert Hooker

"There's no doubt about it; I am totally bored with this class. It is not at all what I was after. In fact, I ended up in the wrong one altogether! I thought this class was going to teach me, a future church staff member, (hopefully), the practical how-tos involved in reaching out to college students. This class called 'BSU Director' will never in a blue moon affect my ministry."

I laugh at my lack of understanding as I think back at my attitude toward W. F. Howard's class at Southwestern Seminary. Little did I know that the following weeks would result in the formation of convictions which would dominate my total concept of ministry as, you guessed it, a BSU Director.

I am eternally thankful for the Lord's direction as He brought me into contact with several Godly men at strategic times in my life. These men, Billie Hanks, Jr., W. F. Howard, Leland Swinney (a professional rodeo calf roper), Ron Wells, Max Barnett—the list could go on and on—are being used by the Lord to formulate my philosophy of ministry. It is my prayer that such input is resulting in a balanced approach to making disciples of college students.

As I seek to share this ever-growing philosophy, let me begin by defining some terminology:

Balanced BSU Program—one following the NSM model which includes Bible Study, Evangelism, Missions, World Issues and Social Concerns, Fellowship, Outreach, etc.

BSU Council/Committee Structure—includes a group of student leaders called the Executive Council—each one responsible for leading a committee whose duties include the planning and carrying out of a specific area of BSU programming.

Discipleship—personal Spiritual growth that results in one's taking on the image of Christ—primarily involves abiding in Christ and in His Word (John 15:1-17).

Discipling—the process of leading others in discipleship which results in evangelism and the multiplication of disciples.

W. F. Howard and Billie Hanks, Jr., have made the major contributions to my philosophy of BSU ministry. Billie led a Discipleship Seminar in my home church while I was away in college. A friend loaned tapes of that seminar to me, so I listened to them in my car while traveling to a deer lease. The content of those messages was exactly what I had been searching for. I was thoroughly amazed at the practical suggestions Billie was sharing in the areas of quiet time, Bible study, memorization, witnessing, etc. Also, for the first time in my life, I saw the principles of following-up new Christians and multiplying disciples. These concepts, however common, were brand new to me. My walk with Christ began to include these ways of abiding in Christ, abiding in His Word, and sharing Him with others.

These basic discipleship principles helped me so much that I planned to dominate my ministry with sharing these with other people. Church education was what I thought I was preparing for at seminary.

Then along came that class of Dr. Howard's that I "accidentally" enrolled in. He finally reached me as God's Holy Spirit gave me ears to hear what was being said about BSU ministry. A dawning took place in my mind and I began to see what a fantastic opportunity the NSM approach to BSU provides as a setting for a discipling ministry.

Dr. Howard and I became good friends as he was the only professor with whom I spent any "outside of the classroom" time that semester. I think he was a little concerned that I would end up imbalanced in my philosophy of BSU. I knew that anyone who had been involved with student ministry for all those years had a lot to teach me. I was now preparing to go into student work.

To speak in general terms, I saw the need to combine two major philosophies of ministry. One was a highly structured program-oriented philosophy. The other was a discipleship model for ministry that consisted primarily of spending time with individuals (and maybe some small groups every once in a while). People had talked to me as if these two models would no more mix than water and oil. They insisted that I would have to take my choice of these two major phi-

osophies. But I had a hunch that they would mix; so here's what I've tried—and it seems to be working pretty well.

The BSU council is a discipleship group: we learn together what it means to follow Jesus. The purpose of our council meetings is many-fold: to grow spiritually, to plan BSU events, and to have fun.

To promote spiritual growth in the council, we have a Bible study/sharing time. The studies have been director-led, president-led, guest-led or even video tap-led. The content is dependent upon our immediate needs or just what the leader is learning that might apply to the group. We conclude each meeting by sharing prayer requests and praying by partners.

Planning BSU events is an obvious activity for the council meeting. Most of the real planning is done either during the committee meetings or during conference times between the director and individual council member. Coordination of events on the calendar is the primary planning activity done during council meetings.

The council meetings must be fun. All work and no play makes BSU a dull scene. Learning to play with the students has been one of my most important areas of growth. It must be fun for me and for them, or we will all suffer from ministry burn-out. Two books, **The New Games Book** and **More New Games**, are excellent resources for fun, simple, non-competitive games. They can be ordered from World Wide Games, Inc., Box 450, Delaware, Ohio, 43015.

The committees are growth groups which are recruited and led by the council members. Each committee is responsible for a specific area of the ministry. Such responsibility gives the group enough structure and activity to make newcomers comfortable, and the growth time keeps the meeting interesting and meaningful for the old-timers. Each emphasis compliments the other and either the program or the growth portion of the meetings would suffer if the other did not exist. The committee experience gives the council members an opportunity to practice the skills of ministry and discipling that are taught in the council meetings.

Conference times between the director and council members are the most flexible portion of the structure we've adopted. Some conference times will be completely domi-

nated by planning and business, while others, even with the same student, will be casual visits over a meal or a snack. With some students, a specific curriculum will be adopted to provide more structured growth times while with other students, we will study a biblical theme that just comes up in conversation. Whatever the activity, the motivation must be the benefit of the individual council member. The success of BSU programming is most definitely secondary to the growth of the individuals who have assumed leadership positions.

In order to provide discipleship opportunities for students who are not on council or committees, we've provided general discipleship classes during a meal time each week. We have used the Billie Hanks discipleship series via video tape with great success. We have also used my personal materials with effectiveness. However, I am more excited than ever before about what we are doing for the first time this semester. The MasterLife Series, available from the Church Training Department appears to be the handle I have been looking for since my first semester in student work. This "program" (for lack of a better term) provides much more than just a compilation of how-to's: how to memorize verses, study the Bible, witness, have a quiet time, pray. The content of weekly studies leads toward the development of Christlike character while the disciplines that aid in abiding in Christ are stressed and checked-up weekly. This is the most complete discipleship program I have ever seen and it is based on the concept of group discipleship—each member is accountable to the group, each member learns from the others in the group, and the leader provides a model for the group. I am thoroughly impressed by this approach to discipling students.

In the course of these few years, I've tried and tested the principles of the two major influences in my life to find that they can be combined in ministry. It is not an easy thing to lead a discipling BSU; in fact, it is the most challenging job I could ever imagine.

This may be a strange confession to appear in an article that deals so much with programming and structure, but the truth of the matter is this: discipling that must depend on a structured approach is never true discipleship. We have had

access to programs and plans of discipleship that no generation before has ever dreamed of. Materials are appearing faster than we can read them all—much less incorporate them into our busy lives and programs. But these resources will never be the answer for the commission we share: to “make disciples of all nations . . .” The root and foundation to a discipling ministry must be the personal life of its leadership. Now this is certainly nothing that we’ve not heard before, but I’m amazed at how often I try shortcuts around this irreplaceable principle. The key to Jesus’ effectiveness with the disciples was not the amount of time He spent with them, how many of them there were, the things He taught, or even the things He involved them in. These are all factors that deserve consideration, but I am convinced that the personal time He spent alone with the Father was the key to His ministry.

The effectiveness of a discipling ministry is absolutely dependent upon the spiritual “temperature” of its leader. We all have times that we think back to and remember how sincere and earnest we were as we sought the Lord in the past. Our natural tendency tends to be “the longer I serve Him, the busier I get” instead of “the longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows”. Drastic measures **must** be taken in my own life to keep my time with Him the priority of every day.

I confess that these statements are goals instead of patterns of reality in my own life. If it were not so tragic, it would be comical how often I get distracted from what I know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, is important. I’ve heard my own words ring hollow in the ears of my students as I’ve sought to lead them by instruction rather than lifestyle. My words with Him **must** outnumber my words about Him. Certainly to abide in Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of a discipling ministry.

The NSM model for BSU structure provides a place of involvement for students at any level of spiritual growth or awareness. Activities like fellowships and intramurals should be designed in such a way as to provide a comfortable atmosphere for non-Christians to be a part of the BSU. However, we can’t put the more mature students on ice while we wait for everyone else to catch up. A balanced, discipling BSU

provides every student on the spectrum of spiritual growth an opportunity to mature in Christ.

2. ONE MODEL FOR A BSU DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY

By Max Barnett

God gives us a great opportunity to invest in a student's life during the time he is on our campus. And we need to be very careful how and what we seek to build into that life.

Throughout the thirteen years I have been Director at Oklahoma University many different approaches have been taken to try to equip students to walk with God and to be equipped to have an effective ministry in the future.

In any program there is both the structured and the unstructured ministry. Here is what we are currently doing in a structural way that has worked very well for us.

We have a Freshman Ministry Team that is aimed at enlisting and helping freshmen. This was started four years ago by one of our staffers, Ralph Neighbour III, and his wife, Pam. At the beginning of school we visit freshmen, enlisting them in Bible studies and encouraging them to attend our Thursday evening Vespers services. In those Bible studies and in Vespers we encourage the freshmen to attend Freshman rallies on three successive Monday nights at the BSU Center. During those meetings we seek to help them and encourage them to become a part of the Freshman Ministry Team to start a few weeks later. Last Fall the theme was "How to Survive on the College Campus"—spiritually, socially, and intellectually.

After attending those rallies where the Freshman Ministry Team concept is thoroughly explained, the freshman then must decide if he wants to become a part of the Freshman Ministry Team. Once the team meetings actually start, no one else can join that team or attend the meetings until the next semester. To join this team a freshman must make four commitments:

1. Attend the one hour and 45 minute weekly meeting on Monday nights. (During these meetings we try to help him in devotional life, Scripture memory, building friendships, learning to share his testimony, building good study habits, etc.)

2. Attend Vespers on Thursday nights (6:30-7:45)—our big meeting for all the BSU where we sing, hear a testimony, and have a weekly speaker.
3. Attend a weekly Bible study led by an upperclassman from the BSU.
4. Attend the BSU Freshman Retreat.

In the spring semester this team is again opened up so that others can join if they will make the above four commitments. It is working. This past fall we had 66 freshmen on that team. They get to know each other and begin to have a vision for reaching their classmates. As a result of having this team, we are finding that these students have grown spiritually and are more committed than ever before. Being a part of this team really helps them feel they are a vital part of the BSU. The BSU staff also has a better opportunity to know freshmen than we did before this team was started. This team also helps to build unity and vision among the freshmen. It exposes them to others their own age who are also trying to walk with God. They are receiving help at the level where they are, and we are very encouraged at what God is doing among them. Many are becoming effective witnesses, and other freshmen whom they have led to Christ are coming onto the team.

After having been on the Freshman Ministry Team during their freshman year, sophomores are asked to join the Discipleship Team which is going through the MasterLife materials. All the sophomores and any upperclassman who wishes can go through MasterLife. While they are going through MasterLife, we do not allow them to lead a Bible study. We feel they need this year to become better established in their personal walk with God. We work on consistency and faithfulness. This past fall we have had over 120 on the Discipleship Team going through MasterLife.

For some time in our ministry we allowed the sophomores to go into our Ministry Team and thus begin to lead Bible studies. We found that many of the sophomores were not ready for the heavy responsibilities of watching over the lives of others. To be a quality Bible study leader requires maturity and skills which we found most of them did not possess. We felt they needed more training and more time to develop before they were given the responsibilities of leading a Bible study.

Going through MasterLife is helping them to become better established in their own personal lives. They can concentrate on their own growth without being prematurely thrust into a ministry. I believe we will have more and better Bible study leaders than ever before as a result of their having first spent a year on the Freshman Ministry Team and their sophomore year going through MasterLife. These MasterLife groups are led by some of our most committed and mature upperclassmen who are guided by two of our staff members.

After having gone through the Freshman Ministry Team as a freshman and the Discipleship Team as a sophomore, most of those students are invited to be on the Ministry Team where each must lead a Bible study or have another approved ministry. This past fall we had 40 leading dorm Bible studies. The Ministry Team must also attend the Ministry Team meetings where they receive help in how to lead Bible studies and how to witness and train another person to walk with God.

There is discipline and commitment involved on every one of these teams. It is not legalistic, but we as a team decide our standards and agree to help each other be faithful. For example, at a recent monthly Friday night meeting of our Ministry Team 79 of the 80 members were present; the one absent girl was ill. Many students will respond to discipline if you have some loving accountability. You will not raise up many strong disciples without discipline.

Since the Ministry Team is made up of juniors through graduate students, we expect more from them. They must agree to six commitments to be on the team:

1. Lead a Bible study or an "approved by the group" ministry, i.e., MasterLife group, etc.;
2. Agree to work on maintaining a solid devotional life;
3. Agree to get God's Word in their lives by Scripture memory;
4. Work on becoming a lifestyle witness;
5. Make all the agreed-upon Ministry Team functions, such as weekly or monthly meetings, Ministry Team retreats, help just prior to school classes beginning, etc.;
6. Seek to personally help another person to grow toward maturity in a one-on-one relationship.

The Ministry Team is the primary labor force on the campus since they help to set the pace for the ministry and are out on the campus meeting students and leading them in Bible studies. As you can perhaps imagine with a freshman being in a Bible study and also on the Freshman Ministry team he is receiving some very good input into his life.

We ask the Ministry Team to make the commitment to lead a Bible study and we as a staff make the commitment to help train them to do that effectively. This mutual commitment between staff and students is a beautiful thing to behold. As never before we are in the battle together—becoming equipped while we do the job. Nothing makes a student more teachable than facing his need. As he is out there ministering, he is more eager to learn how to be more effective.

The commitment of our students is paying off. We averaged over 300 students coming to our Vespers meetings this past fall. Students are becoming Christians and growing. And in numbers as never before they are involved in the local churches in Sunday School and worship services. With the coming of a new pastor, one church has grown from about 30 in the college Sunday School two and one-half years ago to almost 300 each week at present.

In addition to these three teams—Freshman, Discipleship, and Ministry Teams—we have a Leadership Team of about twelve. These people meet for one and one-half hours each week to plan and lead this ministry. This team is somewhat like many BSU Executive Councils. These students are chosen because of their leadership abilities to help the ministry always have a fresh student approach. These people take heavy responsibilities for overseeing the entire BSU ministry.

There is an old saying that goes like this: "The goal explains the road." My goal is to see students growing to maturity and becoming equipped to make an impact on the lives of people around them. Since that is my goal for them, there are certain things I must work on in their lives. Here are some of those:

1. **Their fellowship with God.** This is a starting place. We seek to help them especially in their devotional lives. I want them to develop strong devotional habits

so that for the rest of their lives they will daily spend some time in the Word and prayer. Few students arrive on our campus with that habit built-in.

2. **Bible study.** Here again the objective is that they get to know God in a very personal way. I want them to learn to build their lives on the Word of God. I want them to develop biblical convictions that will give them help and direction as long as they live.
3. **Scripture memory.** We encourage them to memorize biblical truth. I want them to build their lives and ministry on the truth. I want them to have a very practical, working knowledge of the Word of God that will be readily available to the Holy Spirit to minister to their own hearts and in their ministry to others.
4. **Witnessing.** We seek to equip them to share their testimony intelligently. We try to equip them to share the gospel effectively. We try to help motivate and encourage them to share Jesus Christ with others. We try to help them become gracious lifestyle witnesses who will be used of God in the lives of people all around them.
5. **The importance of fellowship and the church.** We encourage students to become involved in a Bible study group, in BSU activities, and in churches. We encourage this not only by example and word, but by leading our students to bring others to these activities. And they do.
6. **Follow-up and training others.** We help our students learn what the needs of new Christians are and how to meet those needs. We encourage them not only to help many, but to be looking for that person with a hungry heart who wants more than the average person. We help to develop their skills in training a person one-on-one as well as to develop their small and large group skills.

In the New Testament you see that they had large group meetings, small group meetings, and person-to-person ministries. I believe a balanced ministry of any size will eventually

have all three. It has been my observation that many ministries are especially weak in the person-to-person training skills.

If that student becomes skilled in person-to-person skills, he will have a greater opportunity to minister wherever he is in the future.

I know student workers sometimes become frustrated. We have so many hats to wear. There are so many things happening on a college campus. Students are busy, and the mood of our day is not commitment. We are not a church and not the only center of a student's religious life; but I for one do not want to trade places with anyone.

Our ministry has flaws. You never can get the ministry in a neat package. But God is at work through it all. Students are being changed, and the testimonies of alumni across this world is that a discipleship oriented BSU is working. Many reports are returning to us of people who are ministering to others and who are grateful to God for what they learned while in the BSU. Recently a lawyer in New York wrote, "I am grateful to God for the education I received at Oklahoma University, but I am most grateful for what I learned at the BSU." Today he is ministering in New York.

Jesus said, "Go into all the world and make disciples." Regardless of whatever else we do, I believe we must major on making disciples—and that means a discipleship oriented BSU.

3. DISCIPLESHIP: A SMALL GROUP APPROACH

By Roland Byrd

The overarching objective of the Baptist Student Union to lead individuals to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord is based on the Great Commission given by Jesus to "make disciples" as the biblical mandate. Wayne McDill describes it best when he states, "Evangelism will be effective to the extent that it depends on the establishment and cultivation of meaningful relationships."¹ These personal relationships are best accomplished through a small group emphasis within the BSU.

The key to Christian growth and leadership development in the Baptist Student Union at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University has been our small group ministry emphasis through covenant/family groups, personal growth groups, and discipleship groups. We have adapted and modified our

covenant task group approach by adding the family group dimension. This expansion has provided for the past three years the personal caring dimension for an enlarged BSU fellowship. Our overall core group has grown to between 150-180 students with a ministry to over 400 students. We have developed eight duo-family groups (or sixteen individual family groups when sufficient numerical growth occurs) to function along with the eight elected vice presidents and their existing covenant task groups. (Programs, Communications, Missions, Ministries, Socials, Personal Growth, Creative Arts, Outreach).

First, let me try to explain the covenant task units in detail. The six to ten students in each group have the primary responsibility of a shared leadership ministry in areas involving either the inward journey or outward journey or both. For example, the Programs covenant group is responsible for planning and coordination of three large retreats each year as well as the weekly program fellowship.

The Ministries covenant group provides leadership and coordination for our BSU ministries to nursing homes, juvenile detention center, Internationals, world hunger projects, tutoring fellow students, etc. This group also sponsors auxiliary ministry groups with married couples, graduates, and blacks which meet on a regular basis.

The Creative Arts covenant group coordinates a coffee-house ministry once a month, a BSU choir and ministry teams (revival, drama, puppet) that are sent out to churches and other mission points.

The Communications covenant group provides the network of cohesion through information flow of basic publicity and promotion of the BSU program of activities. The group is responsible for the liaison with the local churches. The other distinct task is the printing of a newsletter sent to over 1,000 students.

The Missions covenant group is responsible for mission education, recruitment of quarter-break mission teams and summer missionaries, and the money raising projects to support these missionaries. The leaders involved the entire BSU in raising over \$4500 this past year.

The Socials covenant group seeks to encourage wholesome fun and genuine witness through sports, especially volley-

ball. The group is responsible for all the socials and fellowship meals that are basic to the formation and development of meaningful relationships (i.e. basic evangelism).

The Personal Growth covenant group is responsible for the prayer and Bible study emphasis within the BSU as well as special interest seminars which provide growth opportunities. The resource library is managed by this group. The eight family (Bible study) coordinators work closely with this action group.

The Outreach covenant group heads up the witnessing emphasis and enlistment efforts of the total BSU. An outreach family group coordinator from each of the eight family groups along with specified contact persons provide the network for personal outreach. The outreach to freshmen and transfers comprises a major emphasis with a new student welcome, coffeehouse, and cookout/volleyball activities. There is "Operation Friendship" where personal contact is made during the summer prior to a new student's coming. Also, a "new students only" dinner/program is sponsored by this covenant group, and the Executive Committee cooks and serves the meal.

Discipleship is greatly enhanced for these vice presidents and family coordinators (twenty-four to thirty students) in their monthly leadership training seminars. A coordination meeting is held every other week for these leaders.

The goal of the family group is to retain the personal caring dimension in a large BSU while providing additional leadership opportunities. Each family group has an outreach coordinator and a Bible study coordinator who work closely with each vice-president as they try to involve fifteen to twenty students in the total BSU activities, especially family group activities. In addition to the weekly Bible study support session, each group has a volleyball team and is involved in both social and service projects.

The personal growth facet of discipleship for our BSU is a foundational program of ministry to improve the college student's self-esteem. This was developed by the Director in 1977. Small groups of eight to ten individuals are involved for seven weeks in self-affirmation exercises, trust building, communication skills, values, clarification, human sexuality,

self identity, and gift discovery. Forty to fifty students are involved in this each year, resulting in substantial personal growth in self-worth and personal relationship skills.

This personal growth seminar was described in a previous journal (Volume One, Number 2) and a complete procedural description is available from the writer. The success of this program in discipleship training has been evident for the past six years; there is almost always a waiting list of participants. If you see evangelism as primarily relational, you will be attracted to this approach. Self-esteem is definitely improved, faith understanding is enhanced, and greater ability to relate to others is achieved. The entire BSU fellowship benefits from this atmosphere of openness, risking, and sharing of one's self.

A variety of interest groups, book studies and seminars are also offered to supplement the weekly program fellowship meeting.

Specific discipleship training is a new addition to the overall program of discipleship through small groups. With permission and encouragement from Milt Hughes, we began three groups in February using **Patterns for Discipleship**, the new NSM discipleship materials.

We had more interest and commitment to the twenty-four week **Patterns for Discipleship** sessions than we could initially accommodate. The campus minister, associate intern, and a mature senior will each lead a group. Although the overall effectiveness of this new material must be determined later, the overwhelming interest indicates a definite desire for growth and discipline in the areas of prayer and Bible study. The writer is impressed with the **Patterns for Discipleship** material and recommends it to other campus ministers for use and integration into present programs of ministry and Christian growth with students.

We will encourage other students willing to invest a minimum of two to three hours each week to become "accountability partners" in prayer, Bible study, witness, and service using **Living Discipleship** as a resource.

The entire discipleship emphasis of the BSU is centered on the love relationships—love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. The basic task of each person is to establish and maintain meaningful, responsible relationships. Becoming a

Christian and growing as a Christian disciple are the primary focuses of our three-fold small group ministry approaches: personal growth, discipleship training, and leadership development.

Footnotes

1. Wayne McDill, **Making Friends for Christ**. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979) p. 14.