

# Churches and Campus Ministries Helping Students Develop a Global World View

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With all the talk about global world view in this issue, you may feel a need to re-think completely our parochial models of campus ministry. There is a tendency in *progressive* circles to imagine that each new emphasis is a total revolution. Academics are especially prone to dramatize each new fad as the birth of a new world order. I would like to suggest that we have already been doing a lot in Southern Baptist life to develop young adults who are global citizens. If we will make full use of existing structures and do a little fine-tuning, we will find that a global world view is a natural product of our traditional programs.

**1. Don't underestimate Southern Baptist mission education.** I am talking about G. A.s, R.A.s, WMU, Brotherhood--that old stuff! All of those organizations have as a primary focus the creation of a global world view rather than a local or provincial one. Let us imagine that we had a denomination which showed no concern for the rest of the world, but was concerned only with doctrinal purity and the growth of its own institution. (Not much of a stretch, is it!) Can you imagine in such a setting advocating the creation of a new organization which would ask women to meet regularly to learn about other countries and their needs, to set up weekly educational programs for children so

they can be introduced to other cultures, and to shame the men into meeting at least for an occasional breakfast to act interested in global concerns. What chance would you have of launching such a program?

The amazing thing is that we have 100 years of tradition behind us in this endeavor in the SBC and an infrastructure which is already there if under-utilized. Working as I have recently in ecumenical settings where Southern Baptist are a tiny minority, I can tell you that other groups have nothing comparable. Not only is my six-year-old daughter able to be a part of a group every week which learns about such places as Burkina Faso and Chile--and prays for people there--but there is actually a weight of expectation on the church, as if there is something wrong with a church which does not offer such a thing! Many churches do a once-a-year emphasis on foreign missions, but that is in no way comparable to the educational work of standing organizations such as we have evolved in SBC churches. The critical difference between G.A.s/R.A.s and a weekday Bible club such as you might find in other evangelical churches is precisely the element of global awareness. It is an essential ingredient in our approach.

It might be argued that SBC missions education does not produce a global world view because its approach is ethnocentric and imperialistic. I think that a review of materials produced by the Foreign Mission Board and the Woman's Missionary Union would reveal that such caricature of their approach is inaccurate. Certainly there is more emphasis on what our people are doing overseas than on simply understanding the other cultures, but there are plenty of geography lessons and bits of cultural anthropology along the way. What is needed is merely a change in tone, a transposition into another key, rather than a different

structure or melody. If we can be sure that our studies never disparage other cultures--here I am wary of the influence of fundamentalists--our missions education materials can be our best tool in building global world views into young Baptist.

How can church-based mission organizations help our work on campus? Agencies have been promoting Campus Baptist Young Women and Men recently as campus-based mission organizations. I have resisted these as redundant and potentially sexist, but if we viewed these groups as *global awareness* cells within the BSU we would be more open to them. Why not go light on the structure of such groups and focus on the tasks? What about a Campus BYW group that was also a Peacemaker fellowship at the same time? Now *there* would be a model of holistic global concern!

We do not do enough in BSU in most places in plugging our students back into local churches to serve. One area many churches find hard to staff is the G. A. and R. A. program. If campus ministries could train students to have a global world view that included a concern for evangelism, these students could serve local churches as G.A./R.A. leaders, making sure that these programs did not decay by entropy into *game time* but actually built global awareness.

Annual SBC emphases are also opportunities for programming on campus and for offering pre-packaged programs to local churches. Of course Lottie Moon and the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions comes to mind first, but other emphases which could foster a global world view include World Hunger Day, Peace Sunday, Human (Race) Relations Sunday, and Religious Liberty Sunday.

**2. Don't give up on summer missions.** I get the impression that summer missions may have peaked. Some campus ministers are losing interest, asking if

the tail is wagging the dog and if our students are really accomplishing much on the field. Sometimes we will say, "Well, at least it was a learning experience for the student" as if that were a disappointment.

Campus ministers ought to be straightforward about this: the exposure of our students to new areas and to new ministries is of real value to us. We need not pretend to be utterly altruistic as if our *only* concern is to assist the missionaries on the field. We are *equally* concerned to educate our students, both those who are sent out and those who hear their reports. This is a legitimate part of campus ministry which has tremendous potential for developing a global world view and breaking down provincial stereotypes.

If we acknowledge helping our students to grow as important to us as helping the missionaries, we can take more care in selecting and developing summer positions which will be genuinely educational. I have worked in a *newer* convention long enough to know that not all summer missionaries are used wisely. Sometimes they are offered to churches as *freebies* which one would be foolish to turn down, so churches create work or delegate work which could be done by laypersons. Unless the setting itself provides an educational shock (as New York does), being a youth minister in a newer convention is not likely to help a student develop a broader world view.

If we view student missions as a way to stretch our students' awareness, it makes sense to pick only positions that will actually serve that purpose. Positions in-state or similar-to-home would have to find a different rationale. I think we would do better to have *fewer* summer missions positions more carefully selected for their educational value. Basically there would be four categories of positions which would qualify as helping to shape a global world view:

- (1) Ministry in other countries (of any type)
- (2) Ministry with language groups or internationals
- (3) Ministry with the poor
- (4) Ministry in truly urban settings (mega-cities).

If we picked our positions from these groups, every student who returned would have a changed world-view and would be leaven in the loaf of the BSU. Foreign mission positions are far more expensive to fund, but in terms of its effect on the majority of BSU students in the fall, one foreign position is worth many positions in the U.S. It is probably worth a hundred reports from students placed in a semi-rural or suburban churches with a struggling band of transplanted Southerners.

Once we get the students home we have to find ways to use them. The campus minister can dialogue with the student about how the experience changed the world view. Some students may be careful to insulate themselves from troubling questions and a spiritual guide may be needed to direct their reflection on the experiences of the summer. Once a student has been helped to process the experiences, then she is ready to speak to the whole BSU. The presentation will not be *How I Spent My Summer Vacation* but rather *What God Showed Me About the World and Myself*.

**3. Keep plugging away at international student ministries.** Contact with international students has been a BSU emphasis for years, but its potential to impact the world views of our students has rarely been realized. If we can bring our American students into intimate contact with internationals--to foster real friendships--then world views will change. When I worked at Columbia University, roughly half our program was aimed at internationals. This served our purposes both because internationals were an

underserved and underevangelized group and because these programs won us credibility with the administration. There were three main components to the program:

(1) A Host Program for newly-arrived students. We paired incoming students (who applied by mail from overseas--over 200 per year!) with local church members, community volunteers, and students. These hosts helped during the period of adjustment to the U.S. Often the hosts learned a great deal about the culture of their students. At first I used students to host others only as a desperation measure, but it turned out to be a good way to foster some significant relationships.

(2) An Afternoon Tea for internationals two to four times a week. This was an unstructured time of conversation with tea and cookies provided by the campus ministry. At Columbia this attracted a small number, between 2 and 20 on any given day, but those who came invariably got into discussion about cultural, political and religious differences. Not only did the tea provide opportunities for witness, but it also opened the eyes of American students who were recruited to help run the tea. It was hard to sit in that room full of intelligent spokespersons for other societies and not begin to develop something of a global world view.

(3) A mother's support group and play group for preschoolers. This program grew out of a perceived need of the isolated international wives. For the American students who helped with the ministry, it provided an entrance into the family life of other cultures. Many BSUs host or run similar programs in Conversational English. When we allow these ministries to take place in our centers without involving students in these relationships, we miss a golden opportunity to shape their world view.

**4. The campus minister's own view will affect the students.** Perhaps this goes without saying. I grew up as an M. K. in Japan and brought programs for Japanese into campus ministry, so the difference in my world view from that of the typical Alabamian (for example) was fairly obvious. My reservations about American nationalistic religion was evident in what I omitted as well as in my comments on idolatry. Some students were shaped by my concerns and some were merely put off.

What I continue to struggle with is a tendency to focus on issues that are local and urgent. It is terribly difficult not to be consumed by institutional concerns and the needy people who come to us, to such an extent that our interest in global issues of any kind becomes a vague memory. Now that I am in a pastorate, I can say that you guys on campus have an easier time keeping on your toes than we do on church staffs. I hope you can find ways to stimulate your local pastors to think globally, by raising different issues at pastors' conferences, by having lunch conversations which do not promote BSU, and by the example of your own concern.

One final world: Many of the ASBCM members know me. You are asking yourselves, "Is this the Ivy League liberal we once knew? Look at that list. How conventional!" I can understand that. Let me simply assure you that when you are standing on the edge of SBC life you can see some of the strengths of our commitments to missions education, student missions, and international students. We have things going for us already which can move our students toward global world views if we will only make use of them.