

Beyond Prayer

By Jeremy Story

You may have a college or university campus near your home. It needs your prayers. And you can also be effective in acting on those prayers. You don't have to be a college student or professor to impact college life. Here are some practical ways you or your church can make a difference:

1. Adopt an administrator or faculty member from a campus near you or from your alma mater. Ask to meet that person, and then express how grateful you are for his or her work. Let that individual know you are praying, and ask how you can be of service. Pastors and key business people can often access college presidents and other key administrators in ways students never will. Contacting a professor who teaches in the same field in which you work is a fabulous initial connection.

Whole Church Idea: Obtain a list of specific administrators and professors, and start a church-wide "adopt-a-prof" campaign.

2. Write a letter to your alma mater's key administrators and encourage them to allow freedom of religion on campus. We need to be more proactive than reactive. It is easier to head off an administrator's being pressured into a bad decision than it is to reverse a decision already made.

Whole Church Idea: Designate a special month-long focus to praying for college administrators. Ask your congregation to sign up to write letters to one or more administrators during that month. Urge them to send copies of the letters to the church office. Then, to encourage others to write letters also, read a few versions of the submitted letters, anonymously, during church services.

3. Invite a student of your gender into a low-key, regular meeting with you for mentorship and encouragement. One of the fundamental ingredients in sexual purity is mentorship and healthy accountability. Most students want to connect with mentors but don't know where to turn. Many experienced adults think students aren't interested in hearing from them. The opposite is true. Take the risk to initiate a simple meeting over coffee. An especially effective way to connect is to find a student majoring in the field in which you work. And if you are a parent/homemaker, mentors like you are also desperately needed. College students need to learn how to build great family relationships.

Whole Church Idea: Identify college students in your church. Find out which ones would like a mentor for a semester (likely all of them!) and which fields they are studying. Ask people to adopt a student from this list. You might want to have a screening interview with interested mentor candidates to make sure they are appropriate connections with students. Create a list of expectations for mentors. Mentoring doesn't have to be difficult. A simple, brief, regular meeting over coffee with a mature listener can help students immeasurably.

Buy every student in your church an apologetics book that deals with faith and reason, such as *More Than a Carpenter*, *Finding God at Harvard*, or *The Case for Christ*.

4. Open your home for a student gathering. Tell your pastor you would like to host a gathering for students at your home. Fix a meal or order pizza. Students long for the home environment. Even one event a semester is a great alternative to the other social activities that can tear students down. Pulling students outside the campus bubble can offer them perspective.

Whole Church Idea: International students especially appreciate invitations to someone's home during holiday breaks. When other students go back to their families,

internationals usually can't afford to fly around the world back home. Work with an international student ministry to host a holiday student gathering in a church family home or at another fun venue.