

Stirring Revival

A Movement of God on Ivy League Campuses

By Matt Bennett

Everything began changing in our ministry to Ivy League schools in March 2009. That was when members of Christian Union (CU), a ministry at that time serving Princeton and Harvard, began praying together two hours a day. Previously, the full-time ministry workers with Christian Union (called Christian Union faculty) prayed as a group once a week for an hour. But, inspired by revival history, the international Church, and a burden from the Lord for His power to be released, Christian Union faculty began meeting for prayer every morning from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

They spent some of that time talking through biblical and theological issues, addressing why they should devote so much time to prayer. But most of the time they focused on prayer itself. The Princeton and Harvard teams, united via conference call, wrestled with God to release His power and blessing.

The first tangible result of all that prayer came at the beginning of the school year six months later. CU held a retreat for the Princeton campus. Many of the CU faculty had read historical accounts of the Holy Spirit falling on people, but had never experienced Him personally in that way. At this retreat, the Spirit came into the room so powerfully that,

unprompted, some students fell on their faces confessing their sins. Others fell on their faces, unable to stop praising God.

What began during that retreat continued through four years of student conferences, on-campus worship nights, and even during midday prayer meetings. Both Christian Union faculty and students began receiving dreams from the Lord, visions, and even angelic visitations. For a group of conservative evangelicals, some have had difficulty processing these miracles. But there's no doubt God manifested Himself in this way in the Scriptures and in Church history, so why would it be any different today?

Before the outpouring of the Spirit, the ministry had been growing steadily on campus. After it happened, we saw a radical upshot in student interest and involvement. During the freshman welcoming campaign at the beginning of the academic year in September 2009, the atmosphere totally changed from previous years. Before, students got involved in the ministry, but it was laborious work to connect with them and encourage them to participate. After the beginning of the prayer movement, the ministry actually had to start turning students away from some of our programs. Of course, all students can attend the weekly lecture series held on campus, but the Bible courses we offer filled up. Every year since then we've had to turn students away, even as our capacity has increased.

For the 2012–13 academic year at Princeton, more than ten percent of the freshman class participated in the ministry's Bible courses. Decisions for Christ also radically increased. Previously, three to five students came to faith every year. But for the 2009–10 year, we saw ten come to faith, then 20 the next year, and for the last two years, 30 students per year came to faith, just on the Princeton campus. Harvard started to see a similar increase in ministry fruit, although it took a year and a half of prayer (instead of six months at Princeton) to see a comparative breakthrough.

By God's grace, the ministry has expanded to Yale, Columbia, Dartmouth, and Cornell. This fall, a chapter is opening at the University of Pennsylvania. We praise God for what He is doing through the faithful prayers of the group. As one Christian Union faculty member said, "We'll never go back to the time when we didn't pray so much. I now see students' lives change as much in a semester as I would have hoped to happen over four years in the past."

We praise the Lord for His grace and favor. To see a five-minute video featuring the ministry at Princeton, go to christianunion.org/university/ministries/princeton.

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