

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EVANGELIZING BLACK STUDENTS

Why is evangelizing Black college and university students crucial?

EXPANSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD - MARK 4:30-32

As InterVarsity staff we seek to expand Christ's mission on earth to the college campus, which includes unreached Black students. With our focus on engaging the campus culture, InterVarsity's Black Campus Ministries is uniquely positioned to bring leadership in reaching unchurched, Non-Christian Black students—a community with which most ministries have not been effective.

CONVERSION AND DISCIPLESHIP OF KEY BLACK LEADERS

Many black students will become future leaders in society, holding positions of significant influence in their communities, throughout the nation, and across the world. It is crucial that these leaders are followers of Christ, using their gifts to advance God's kingdom—and not merely for own purposes and ambitions.

RESTORATION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Evangelization of Black students lays the foundation to move the Black community from a people bound by a history/identity of subjugation and victimization to a restored people equipped to be missional deliverers, both locally and worldwide, of people that are spiritually, socially, and institutionally oppressed.

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST'S CALL TO HIS DISCIPLES

We, as InterVarsity staff, are commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to students of all ethnicities and cultures, fulfilling our destiny to live out the mission of Jesus Christ on Earth and to be restored to God the Father in heaven (Matt 28:18-20, Gen 12:1-3).

MINISTRY DIAGNOSTIC: KEY OBSTACLES

There are a number of obstacles to evangelizing Black students. Some obstacles you have a greater potential to influence than others. Which are ones that you have potential influence over, and that you can prayerfully work towards changing? (If you are working in a multi-ethnic chapter, many of the obstacles listed in that Next Steps resources will be applicable here as well.)

Take some time with your staff or leadership team to discuss the obstacles listed below. Check the 3 issues you believe are the largest obstacles your ministry experiences in evangelizing Black students. (Obviously to do this well, you will need to have had previous interactions and discussions with Black students on campus—for some that might be your first next step.)

INFLUENCE OF ISLAM

Some Blacks students subscribe to a historical or cultural belief that Jesus is White and that “Christianity is the White Man’s Religion.” They may relate conversion to Christianity to assimilation into a “White” culture and worldview. Some of these ideas are due to large numbers of Blacks converting to the Nation of Islam during the Black nationalism movement of the sixties, and many today have shifted to more traditional Islamic beliefs.

CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY OR SPIRITUAL RELIGIOSITY

For many Black youth, Christianity is often confused with culture and family tradition. Black students who may have “grown up in the church” may attribute their Christianity to church attendance or to familial affiliation to Christianity. Because of this, they may be unaware that they can obtain a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that transforms their lives.

GENERATIONAL SHIFT IN WORLDVIEW

Many Black non-Christian students have not heard an explanation of Christianity relevant to their experience and their generation. Descriptions of Christian framed largely in the context of slavery, the civil rights movement and disenfranchisement are not as compelling to those students whose experience has been upward mobility, affluence, and global awareness. There are also generational stereotypes and cultural shifts that are for the most part not addressed by the church—students view Christianity as an “old folks” religion. Many traditional Black churches have great difficulty in reaching the post-Christian, post-Civil rights generation.

FAMILY TIES

In general, Black students are expected to defer to the opinions, welfare and influence of their families. They may have difficulty establishing a faith of their own, especially if this faith seems antagonistic to their family traditions or religion.

KEY OBSTACLES CNT'D

SEPARATION BETWEEN BLACK CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN STUDENTS

Many churched Black students have been taught that they should stay away from negative influences and to essentially remove themselves from relationships with “sinful” people. Many Christian students may default to surrounding themselves with other Christians while having merely superficial connections to Non-Christian communities—rather than learning how to share their faith and how to be positively influential among their Non-Christian friends.

UNCHURCHED STUDENTS

Many forms of evangelism in the Black community presuppose a familiarity with the gospel and Christian terminology (salvation, sanctification, holiness, etc.) This generation of Black students, more than any other, has more people who have never had a church experience or have never read the Bible—making evangelism more challenging than in prior generations of Black students.

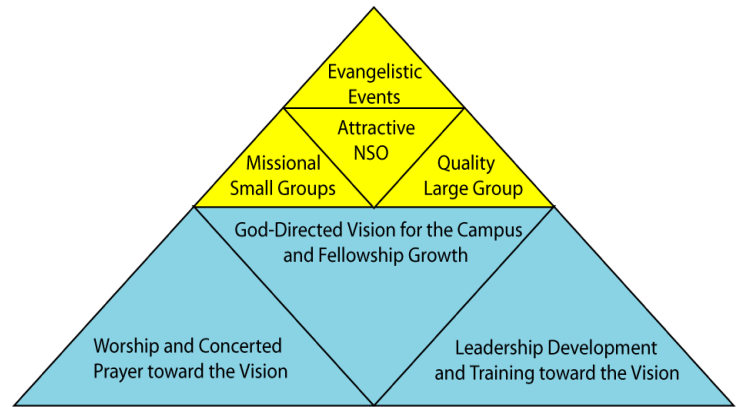
OTHER: _____

MINISTRY DIAGNOSTIC: FELLOWSHIP ASSESSMENT

What are the core weaknesses for your fellowship in evangelizing Black students?

The principles for developing your fellowship’s evangelism to Black students can be assessed in the context of the overall chapter building framework. Greater effectiveness will involve integrating this value into your overall chapter building efforts.

In which areas is the integration of this value strongest, and in which is it weakest? Where might be the most strategic areas to focus?



Take some time with your staff or leadership team to review the categories below. Check the 2 areas you believe are strongest, and 2 that are weakest. Remember that the blue bottom 3 triangles are the “behind the scenes work” that lays the foundation for the rest of the pyramid. You may make short-term gains without those 3, but they will be critical for longer-term and larger scale advances.

VISION

Does your fellowship’s vision meaningfully involve evangelizing Black students? Does the student leadership understand why effectiveness in this area is critical to attaining the fellowship’s goals?

PRAYER

Is this an issue that your fellowship prays about explicitly? To what extent is this issue a concern in the fellowship overall?

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Are there leaders in your fellowship who are being equipped to evangelize Black students? Are they aware of the obstacles that need to be overcome?

FELLOWSHIP ASSESSMENT CNT'D

QUALITY LARGE GROUPS

Are your large groups meetings conducive for evangelizing Black students? Are these students taken into account as the speakers, format, atmosphere and objectives for your large groups are decided upon?

MISSIONAL SMALL GROUPS

Is there a ministry or small group(s) in your fellowship that sees evangelizing Black students as a critical component of their mission?

NEW STUDENT OUTREACH

Is your New Student Outreach attractive to non-Christian Black students? Are there intentional efforts made to do things that would draw them? Does the majority of the Black community know that you are out there?

EVANGELISTIC EVENTS

Do your evangelistic events engage issues of interest to the Black community? Is the Black community aware of your evangelistic events?

NEXT STEPS I: LOCATING PEOPLE RESOURCES

As you begin to diagnose your situation, you probably will need to find people who can assist you. These might be people who can advise or counsel you—even if they cannot do it regularly, they might be willing to sit down with you once or twice to provide insight and suggestions. There might also be people who can speak at Large Groups or retreats, train staff or student leaders, invest in your Black students, etc.

Look at the ministry obstacles and challenges that you listed, along with the priority needs you determined in your fellowship assessment. Who might be good resource people? Here are some questions that may help you find them; go through each of these questions with your Staff or leadership team. You may need to find other students or local community members to help you answer some of these questions.

1—Are there any predominately Black churches that students on your campus attend? Are there people in these churches that could be potential resource people?

2—Are there any Black Christian faculty or staff on your campus?

3—Are there Staff in your region (Black and Non-Black) who have had some success in evangelizing Black students? “Who can help you identify staff outside of your region who would be willing to provide guidance?”

4—Are there people organizing events that you could take your students to which could help them grow in this evangelizing Black students?

5—Have you asked other staff in the area/region about resources they could suggest? Are there local community members or students who can help you with these questions?

NEXT STEPS II: STRATEGIC TIPS

As you are discerning strategies to move forward in this area, your best assets will probably be people resources and material resources. Additionally, we have included some strategic tips that have been effective in different InterVarsity groups. Many of these tips are relevant to students in general, and not solely to Black students. Go through this list with your staff or leadership team, and determine some strategic next steps that you can take.

CASTING THE VISION FOR EVANGELISM TO THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Evangelism might not be a value for some of your students. Some may see it as a ministry primarily for those specifically gifted for evangelism. Seek out resources to equip you to communicate the importance of evangelism in a compelling manner.

IDENTIFY A FOCUS GROUP WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

We as IV staff must recognize that the Black student populations on our campuses include various cultures and sub-cultures (Africans, athletes, specific dorm, hip-hop cultured, etc.). It may be helpful to choose a specific sub-culture to focus upon.

DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIVERSITY WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

The diverse cultural heritages (Jamaican, African, Caribbean, etc.) of Black students affect the way they may view Christianity and the Church. Many Black nations have been colonized, and a certain level of animosity may be present if the colonizing nation forced Christianity upon the people. It is also important to recognize that different cultures have different values with regard to family, education, etc., that may affect their counting the cost of following Jesus. Know the culture of the subgroup to which you are ministering.

STRATEGIC MISSIONAL PRAYER

Staff and student leaders need to commit to consistent prayer focusing on outreach to the chosen community. Using a prayer meeting that is already established may prove to be the most effective approach.

STRATEGIC TIPS CNT'D

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

A key aspect of our outreach is through relationships. Assess whether students have relationships with Non-Christian Black students on campus. Encourage students to involve themselves in contexts where they can develop and deepen these relationships. The cross-cultural relationships must be based in Christ's love, rather than guilt or an abstract value for diversity.

ESTABLISH RELEVANCE TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Many black students do not perceive the gospel to be relevant to their everyday lives. They may have some sense of its importance for the afterlife, but don't see the value of Jesus for the present. You must discover the issues that the Black community on your campus is concerned about, and how the gospel addresses them. Take opportunities to engage the campus, social and world issues that they are invested in. Attend campus events that are relevant to Black students and/or attended by Black students; read campus articles written for and by Black students; listen carefully and learn about the heart of your local Black community.

TRAINING / APOLOGETICS FOR THE DIVERSITY OF BLACK STUDENTS

Currently, there is a notable division in worldviews among Black students. Specifically, middle-upper to upper class Black students are being affected by the post modern ways of thinking; whereas typically Black students for lower socio-economic backgrounds are more influenced by a post-colonial mindset, in which Blacks feel as though Christianity is a "white man's religion", possess the aversions that come with that and are tempted to seek other religions such as Islam. An apologetic for increased secularism, classism, sexism, racism and materialism are also needed to successfully navigate conversations with Black students. We need to be well versed in clear gospel outlines that speak to the injustice in the world and how the Kingdom of God has come to address it.

VARY THE TYPE OF EVENT YOU USE TO HAVE EFFECTIVE WITNESS: CPR

Three types of events to consider: Cultivating, Planting, Reaping (CPR)

Cultivating events, such as an Open mic nite, build trust for Black students with InterVarsity.

Planting events, which raise a topic of concern to Black students and how the Kingdom of God addresses it, help to sow seeds of interest for how Jesus is actually relevant.

Reaping events call for students to submit to Jesus as Lord, and to commit to join Jesus in His mission.

So for each event ask: What is the goal of this event? What is the main thing you want to see accomplished? Would you like to see Black students come to trust InterVarsity? To become interested in the gospel? To make a commitment to Christ? These questions can help you develop a coherent strategy for evangelizing Black students.

NEXT STEPS II: STRATEGIC TIPS

BLACK GROUPS INVESTIGATING GOD (BGIGS)

While GIGs have proven to be very effective in bringing many students to faith, some cultural translation may be important. Gigs are mostly administered using the inductive method in ways that may not take into account Black teaching, dialogue and communication styles. Secondly, some reference points used in GIGs are not widely known to the Black community (e.g. Lord of the Rings). A careful consideration of culturally relevant methods and examples for GIGs is crucial to the success in reaching Black students with GIGs. A suggested GIG is an investigative study of John Teter and Alex Gee's book Jesus and the Hip-Hop Prophets (see resources section)

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH: LIVING THE GOSPEL

We are living in a justice generation in the Black community. They are post-advocacy and are about seeing the demonstration how the gospel is practically relevant to issues of injustice in the Black community and the world. Thus, any evangelism that gets students involved in experiencing Jesus' heart by actually following Jesus in the world will greatly benefit the students. Great examples of these are urban projects, habitat for humanity and raising money to deliver those suffering injustice in African countries

NEXT STEPS III: SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

Our fellowships must embrace a vision for evangelizing Black students from a Biblical basis. Here are some passages staff InterVarsity Staff have used to help their students gain ownership and insight for sharing the gospel. We've also included a brief listing of some of the main points derived from each passage.

Passages for helping a fellowship develop a heart for evangelism with Black college students:

MATTHEW 28:16-20, ACTS 1:6-8

God has called to make disciples of all nations, and to be his witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This is the great commission that inspires us to call Black students to respond and follow Jesus' leadership.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-20

God has given all believers a ministry of reconciliation. This demands that we try to "try persuade men and women," "regard no one from a worldly point of view," and "implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." This passage continues to demonstrate that helping Black students be reconciled to God is a mandate, not an option. We are his ambassadors to Black college students.

JOHN 4

Jesus is seen with his disciples traveling through Samaria, a town always avoided by Jewish people. There are multiple challenges in the passage. The first is that Jesus goes the places other good religious people avoid for the sake of bringing his Kingdom reality there. His interaction results in her salvation and her immediate witness to the people who once marginalized her. We also see a snapshot of Jesus' interaction with his disciples and the famous verse, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." Jesus' call is for his followers to move with urgency and expectation for a harvest of salvation. We often feel tempted to wait until we're more prepared to evangelize. However, the Samaritan woman leaves her initial experience with Jesus and begins to share her newfound relationship with Jesus with her people. Jesus demonstrates that his followers must cross socially acceptable lines of gender, race and marginalization for the salvation of one and of many.

NEXT STEPS III: SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

ROMANS 10:14-15

This challenge is that we carry Jesus message to Black students who need an opportunity to hear the gospel. This passage can be used to present the necessity of preaching the gospel and extending an invitation to follow Jesus' leadership. This approach is more acceptable to Black college students who tend to be more confrontational. This passage can also be used to commission people into being sent as evangelists to the campus.

GENESIS 12:1-3; ROMANS 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10, 12:1-2

This is the call of Abram through which it was prophesied by God that all the nations of the world would be blessed. The call here is to see oneself as a part of God's plan for all people since creation. The call is to join God in his work of blessing Black college students with a relationship with God. Use this as a starting point for preaching and teaching students the simplicity of the gospel found on the "Romans Road". One modification is that we don't just pray a prayer and that's the end. We must continue to offer ourselves as "living sacrifices" that are no longer conformed in our lifestyles so that we can live lives knowing and pursuing God's will. This adds the element of discipleship that many Black students need to understand and embrace before praying a salvation prayer.

BOOK OF JONAH

God's call to Jonah, Jonah's choice, and the effect that it had on an entire community are all themes that can be explored with your students. The book of Jonah reveals the impacts of Jonah's individual choices on each community he entered and even the one he attempted to avoid. The book shows that Jonah's disobedience was a personal discipleship issues that had corporate consequences. His disobedience was motivated by his desire to have the Ninevites (later called the Babylonians) annihilated. Jonah was aware of God's prophecy to use the Ninevites as a tool to bring his divine judgment upon the Israelites. The hatred between the Israelites and Ninevites was mutual. Jonah was also aware of God's mercy and grace when people repent. His nationalism and racism were undergirding his decision to respond in disobedience to God's call. Jonah's presence in the community of sailors and in Nineveh caused these communities to respond to God reverence and obedience much like the relationship we call people to have with Jesus.

JOHN 14:12, LUKE 4:18-19

This brief verse references the "greater works" Jesus' disciples were to do. The work Jesus did of preaching the Kingdom is the work his disciples are to continue.

NEXT STEPS IV: MATERIAL RESOURCES

Often there are material resources (books, bible study guides, training exercises, etc.) that can be helpful. As you are determining the “next steps” in advancing your ministry, here are a few material resources to keep in mind:

Background Reading Materials

Moore, York. Growing Your Faith By Giving It Away

Ordinary people can participate in extraordinary encounters when we follow God's leading to people who need to hear about Jesus. York describes the adventure God has taken him on to share the gospel with people in every sphere of life--family members and coworkers, friends and strangers, people he didn't like and people who didn't like him. Through his vivid stories, we catch a glimpse of the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit to guide us and empower us even when we don't have a clue what to say or do.

Teter, John. Get the Word Out

This book powerfully shows how your witness is backed up by God, who follows through on the work he prompts you to begin. Even now God is preparing the way for you to get his Word out to those around you.

Keener, Craig S. & Usry, Glenn. Black Man's Religion

Black Man's Religion is one of the first of its kind, a pro-Christian reading of religion and history from a Black perspective. Fascinating and compelling, it is must reading for all concerned for African-American culture and issues of faith.

Thomas C. Oden. How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind

This book is a scholarly investigation of the central role that Africa has had in past and current Christian thought. For those who believe that Islam is the religion of Africa, this book is a well-written and enlightening counter-argument.

Gee, Alex & Teter, John. Jesus and the Hip Hop Prophets

Written on subway walls and tenement halls, their lyrics challenge us as individuals and as a society to stop doing wrong and learn to do right (Isaiah 1:16-17). They paint an honest picture of life as it is lived, and hint at a vision of life as it ought to be lived.

Wakabayashi, Allen. Kingdom Come

Focusing on the kingdom of God will revolutionize how you live out your faith, how you think about your world and how you explain the good news about Jesus. Ultimately, understanding yourself as a citizen of the kingdom will empower you to be one of God's change agents in the world.

Richardson, Rick. Reimagining Evangelism

Reimagining evangelism can help set us free for authentic and Spirit-empowered witness. This book is for those who are looking for a fresh way to share their faith that will require more—not less—of them.

Richardson, Rick. Evangelism Outside Of The Box

We need new ways of telling people the old, old story. We need to look again at our usual mental habits if we want to reach people who have a brand new mindset of their own. We need to get outside the box of ideas and practices that are sacred to us but are not sacred to God.

Pollard, Nick. Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult

This book shows to break through the barrier of disinterest. He shows why Jesus can and should make a difference for the people you know. And he shows how you can interest them in learning more about Jesus.

DC Talk & The Voice of the Martyrs. Jesus Freaks

Radical stories of people sharing, living, and even dying for their faith across the world.

Everts, Don. Jesus with Dirty Feet

Whether you've never looked closely at the Christian faith or you've dismissed it as irrelevant, you owe yourself a glance at a Jesus unencumbered by stereotypes. You might be surprised at what you see.

Wright, Rev. N.T. Simply Christian

The book's central metaphor is that of "echoes." In our longing for justice, our hunger for spirituality and relationship, and our delight in beauty, we are hearing "echoes of a voice" – and it is in the story of Jesus that we "recognize the voice whose echoes we have heard"

Livingstone, Neil. Picturing the Gospel

In our image-based culture, people need to visualize something to understand it. This has never been more true about our communication of the gospel. But sometimes our understanding of the gospel gets stuck in a rut, and all we know is a particular outline or one-size-fits-all formula. While we hold to only one gospel, the New Testament uses a wealth of dynamic, compelling images for explaining the good news of Jesus, each of which connects with different people at different points of need.

Pippert, Rebecca Manley. Out of the Salt Shaker

Through stories, biblical insight and plain common sense, Pippert helps us feel relaxed and enthusiastic about sharing our faith. She offers an inspiring view of what effective, engaging evangelism might look like

MATERIAL RESOURCES CNT'D

WEBSITES

York Moore's Website. www.Tellthestory.net
The Ministry Exchange. www.intervarsity.org/mx
James Kennedy, Evangelism Explosion www.eeinternational.org
James Choung Jameschoung.net/tellit/

TRAINING RESOURCES

Allen Wakabayashi AMW Gospel Outline (found this to be more helpful for Black students in understanding the whole gospel story)
Carl Ellis teachings on evangelism, whole gospel and core issues for Black community
Dave Biskie: Updated Bridge Diagram
Dave Biskie & Beth Rosselious: Proxe Manual- How-to in use of art in creating interactive ways to share gospel
Amazing Grace Track info from GLE & GLW Chapter Focus Week (can be found on GLE website)
GIG Resources from IVPress and the Ministry Exchange (contextualized for Black community)

SOWING AND HARVESTING IDEAS

Spades Tournament
Soul Food Dinner
Open Mike Sessions
Video Game Tournament
The Block Party (Gracee Biskie has more information)
Evening of Black Excellence
Internet tools such as facebook and myspace
Apologetics of the Hip Hop Culture
Regional Black Student Conferences

BCM NEXT STEPS SUMMARY

TARGET AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

What are the 3 key obstacles/challenges you are seeking to address?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

What two areas of chapter building are weaknesses you need to invest in?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

NEXT STEPS TO TAKE:

What two areas of chapter building are strengths you can capitalize on?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

Which strategic tips in particular will be helpful as you take your next steps?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Who are people resources that can help you take your next steps?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

What might be important scriptural and material resources for taking these next steps?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____