



CULTIVATING MISSIONS HEARTS

DAVID ROLAND DISCIPLES BELIEVERS AND SHARES CHRIST WITH NONBELIEVERS THROUGH COLLEGIATE MINISTRY.

BY KIM CRUSE

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LEAD WOMEN ON MISSION: Use with meeting plan on page 14 in Women on Mission Leader (Spring 2021).
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Imagine you're 18, and it's your first day of college. Your veins pump with adrenaline, thrilled for the new adventure called "adulting." You see some friends from high school and move into the dorm together. The fun continues, and the next four years launch you into a fulfilling career. Or maybe you are alone for the first time, far from home and terrified. *This place is huge. Where do I go first? Will I find friends?* Maybe you grew up in church and are strong in your faith; maybe you aren't. Perhaps you've never been to a Christian church.

You may have been raised in a Muslim, Hindu, or atheist culture, but you've left your family and homeland to venture to faraway America on a sports scholarship. You know no one and are homesick, looking for a community to make you feel at home.

This is where North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary David Roland and Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) intersect with students' needs at Shorter University in Rome, Georgia. BCM offers so much more than just a few study tables and occasional



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free meals. Here, new students can find community, genuine friendships, and acceptance—and that's just the beginning. It is poised to impact students in multiple ways and influence them to commit their lives to Christ and live out their callings. Many BCM students have become missionaries, pastors, youth pastors, and workplace disciple makers. David knows firsthand the lifelong impact of campus ministry.

DAVID'S JOURNEY

David's faith journey got real when he was a college student, so he understands this critical time of making lifelong decisions and starting habits that will determine the direction of one's future. When he was growing up in a Christian family in Covington, Kentucky, both his parents were active in church. His mother was heavily involved in WMU, and he attended the children's missions programs. He made a profession of faith at eight years old but committed his life fully to Christ during his sophomore year at the University of Kentucky. He then joined BCM, and at Ridgecrest Conference Center in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, he surrendered to full-time ministry.

After that, he enrolled in The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and he found God had more in store for him there than just a degree. During his first

summer, while serving as a collegiate ministry intern, he met Margaret. After he graduated from seminary and married Margaret, the couple served in Chicago with NAMB from 1984–86. David served in campus ministry at two universities, and Margaret worked in the city. On her daily train commute into Chicago, she would use the 45-minute ride to start conversations with other passengers.

Near the end of his studies, he and Margaret decided that unlike the many students who planned to go serve in their hometowns, they wanted to go where others weren't willing to go. The journey has had the typical ups and downs of life and ministry, but they have witnessed God's hand at work through the various seasons and challenges. When their first child wasn't developing as others his age were, they learned he had Williams syndrome, a rare genetic disorder marked by cardiovascular disease, developmental delays, and learning challenges. Though it was difficult to hear, they trusted the Lord and prayed Philippians 4:4–7 many times. God replaced the couple's anxiety with peace and showed them how this diagnosis could be an avenue for them to reach out to other families with special-needs children. Eventually they ended up at Shorter University serving with BCM.



CAMPUS IMPACT

A collegiate ministry has a twofold purpose: disciple believers and share Christ with nonbelievers. At Shorter's BCM, David and the BCM students utilize several strategies to meet new students and engage them in gospel conversations. One effective strategy, The Great Exchange, is a way of meeting students through campus surveys. Some questions on the survey are: Describe your spiritual background. What was it like? Do you believe in God? If so, what is He like? What do you think is humankind's biggest problem? What do you think is the solution? Who in your opinion is Jesus Christ? The surveys are a conversational, nonconfrontational way to connect with students and spend time listening to their beliefs and questions. Most students are open to discussing their beliefs and hearing about Christianity. In exchange for doing the surveys, students who are interested in knowing God are given either a Bible or a copy of *More Than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell. A BCM student follows up with them soon after.

Another approach David and the BCM students use is called The Story. This is simply sharing their story (testimony) interwoven with God's story. In some circles, these are called "filtering events" because they are designed to "filter" out those people who are open to hearing about Christ. It identifies people open to

conversations so you can meet them again for follow up, then involve them in Bible study and walk them through the journey of understanding redemption in Christ.

New students are also drawn to BCM by intentional outreaches that meet a felt need, such as food. Given college students are *always* looking for free food, local churches partner to provide free meals. The churches also supply recreation for stress relief and good, clean fun. Many students find faith in Christ for the first time through Bible studies, worship times, retreats, events, and relationships with David and other students.

EQUIPPING TIME

BCM also provides avenues for existing believers to be disciplined and mentored, develop leadership skills, and be involved in ministry and missions. One of David's greatest joys is seeing a student's life transformed by the gospel and he or she follows God's call on his or her life and learns to invest in others. Students participate in and lead worship times as well as small groups called Hawks Nest (the hawk is the school mascot). These small groups incorporate spiritual growth, mentoring, missions, and community. David knows investing time in mentoring students in their various leadership positions and holding them to a high standard of accountability will produce disciples who make disciples.

FROM CAMPUS TO THE NATIONS

David is passionate about instilling a love for missions. Every year, he and the BCM leadership team have a special worship night to learn about and pray for the persecuted church. This event is held in a dorm's dirty, dark basement, where the students sit on the floor on tarps as they learn to identify with churches meeting in secret all around the world. The speaker for this annual event is an IMB missionary who shares about how God is working among a persecuted unreached people group.

Zach, a student with a Muslim father, was led to Christ by a student leader at BCM. That's the kind of missions heart David wants to cultivate, so that's why he takes students on mission trips each summer to America's inner cities, local refugee ministries, East Asia, and North Africa. He loves to see students catch a vision of what God is doing around the world. He wants to see every believer take ownership in the responsibility of reaching those in the most unreached and hardest-to-reach places. Like any good leader, he leads by example, going to those hard places himself and bringing his wife and three children along.

The Rolands' ministry often takes place at their home as well. Anyone who has worked with young adults knows university students want to hang out at night and be a part of your family. David and Margaret frequently welcome students in their home for meals, personal conversations, sharing Scripture, giving biblical advice, playing games, and praying together. Every year, they host a pool party at their house and invite all the university's resident assistants and summer orientation staff.

Along with ministering to students, David has also seen BCM impact those in the athletic programs. Serving as chaplain for the soccer team, he encounters many international students who have come to Shorter on athletic scholarships. Many of them have no background knowledge of Jesus Christ. Through time spent with the team, he builds relationships leading to friendships. From there, he can engage them in conversations explaining who God is, what He is like, and how they can know Him and have their sins forgiven.

Karen, an assistant basketball coach, went with David and the BCM students on a mission trip to North Africa to lead basketball clinics for children. Soon after, Karen



came into his office and said, "You're going to think I'm crazy, but I believe God is calling me overseas to do missions in North Africa." Sure enough, she did end up serving God overseas for several years. Liz, a BCM intern, has led several young women from the soccer and softball teams to Christ, and seven have been baptized.

For some, the conversion process takes years. David met regularly with an African student who was open to gospel conversations but graduated and moved away without ever making a decision for Christ. Then he called one day to tell David he gave his life to Jesus.

Campus ministry requires one to sow seeds abundantly and widely, knowing not all will fall into good soil as described by Jesus in Matthew 13:8. "Still other seed," He said, "fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." Those who do receive the message are radically transformed by the gospel and become multiplying disciples.

Pray for David and Margaret and the leadership team at Shorter BCM to continue to be consistent and intentional in boldly sharing Christ with the students and equipping them to take the gospel to the nations. If you have a BCM near your city or town, then consider contacting it to see how your church can join in its ministry.

KIM CRUSE and her husband, Jeff, served with the IMB for 22 years in campus church planting in the Philippines and missions mobilization for Southeast Asia. While on a two-year leave of absence, she currently serves as the missions discipleship specialist for Tennessee WMU. She loves to spend time with family and friends enjoying nature on a bike, kayak, or on foot.