



NORTHEAST REPORT

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Feeding Hungry Students



As I lounge on my living room couch after a deeply satisfying Thanksgiving meal, I cannot help but reflect on God's gracious gifts. One of those gifts is the RUF Large Group, or Supper Club as we call it, at the University of Maryland, College Park.

I remember my first Supper Club experience – it was my first semester of college, and I walked through

the doors of the Grand Ballroom in the Student Union all by myself. After a few seconds of uneasiness, I was warmly greeted by several guys with name tags. They welcomed me, asked me some basic information about myself, and invited me to sit at their table. I instantly connected with a few people who were music majors like myself. Then I gladly helped myself to several servings of Chick-Fil-A nuggets and sandwiches. To further enhance the experience we all played a trivia game. I felt as though I was a part of this large family.

After we all finished dinner, we began to sing songs to the Lord. Coming from a non-denominational, all-black church background, I had never sung a hymn in my life. Nonetheless, I tried my best to learn the tune. Fortunately, the words were projected on the screen so that I could at the very least read along. I felt like I was in a completely unfamiliar environment – I knew none of the songs, no one was screaming and running around the room, the songs were never more than five minutes. It was just a group of many calm college students singing rich, meaningful words. No clapping. One song to the next.

Then, an energetic bald guy put down his guitar and started reading a passage from Luke's Gospel about Zacchaeus the tax collector. This was the first time I heard a sermon that wasn't about what I had to do. Instead, it was all about what God had done – the good news of Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection. This is the real beauty of Supper Club. Every person will hear the simple,

clear gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All will constantly be reminded that the great shepherd was condemned for the sins of his sheep and graciously counts them as righteous before the Father (2 Corinthians 5:20). The preaching of the word allows all the other things to fall into place. Reconciliation to God sets us free. It allows us to love one another as ourselves through greeting strangers, dining with fellow sinners, and singing with power in honor of the triune God from whom, through whom, and to whom are all things (Romans 11:36).

I thank God for this ministry at the University of Maryland. In His most wise and holy providence, He chose to bring me to Himself through RUF. I look forward to Supper Club every Wednesday because it is a special gathering. Sometimes I come in stressed and overwhelmed from many assignments and exams, but I always leave challenged and encouraged. Most of all, I leave knowing more about God and more about myself, ready to reach the lost and glorify God. I pray this ministry continues and grows with the support of the church for years to come.

– by Joshua Lewis, University of Maryland

Feeding the Gospel

University of Maryland

In April of 2016 our Large Group Meeting, which started a bit after 7:30 PM on Wednesday night, had dwindled to a small group of about fifteen students. I told my student president that we needed to re-think and try to re-boot what we were doing, so we discussed and analyzed the situation. With many STEM majors and music performance majors we found that the time of the meeting and length of time away from studying (if they ate dinner before Large Group) would be three to four hours. We had always started the semester with strong numbers, but they began to dwindle as the heaviness of exams and assignments



Supper Club at the University of Maryland

pressed in. So for the rest of that semester we did some social events with food and tried to create momentum going into our summer conference. We saw an increase in numbers right off the bat. So out of humility and in desperation we changed the format, and the Lord blessed us with more students.

Supper Club is an expanded Large Group Meeting during the dinner hour. We start promptly at 6:00 PM with welcome and a blessing for the food. Each week we serve dinner for 55 to 65 students. The free dinner has provided a natural display of grace as students enjoy a change from the dining hall and commuters stay for dinner and meeting before they go home. There have been natural organic friendships as students enjoy a meal seated around tables of eight. At 6:25 we transition to announcements, worship and message. Our goal is to respect time and be done by 7:15. Learning the demographics of our campus with many commuters and engineering students brought these changes, and we praise the Lord for what he is doing. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*

University of Connecticut



University of Delaware

This was the first semester that we have had regular large group going with music, prayer, and preaching. I have been preaching through a series called "Meals with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke." If you read through Luke, you will notice that Jesus is regularly eating with people and using that time around a table with others to teach them what the good news of the gospel is all about and what it looks like to know him and follow him.

One of my texts this semester was Luke 14. There Jesus tells a parable to help his listeners grasp what the kingdom of God is like. He compares it to a great banquet. I love that Jesus uses a story about an amazing party with hunger-satisfying rich food to help us taste and feel what it means to know God. As Jesus tells this story, though many reject this banquet for terrible reasons, God will have a full house and sends his servants to the far corners of the earth to compel people to come in and feast. On the college campus the temptation to look for satisfaction and joy apart from Jesus and the gospel is constant and never-ending. Our Large Group Meeting is like a mid-week appetizer to direct students' hearts to look to Jesus and find their desires satisfied in him. *Nick Owens, Campus Minister at the University of Delaware*



Musicians at University of Delaware RuF

Lehigh University

"Balir" joined me up front after our Tuesday night Large Group Meeting.

"Christians also believe in Jesus?" He asked inquisitively. I nodded in response. "Yes we do. But," I added, "there are major differences between what the Bible says about Jesus and what the Koran says."

He went on, "What about Jews? Do they believe in Jesus?"

"Jews believe in a savior, a Messiah, but they do not believe Jesus is the Messiah."

"What do you mean?"

Chalk in hand, I drew some stick figures. "The Bible and the Koran talk about Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Jews believe the Messiah is coming. Adam, Abraham, and Moses point to an expected savior but Jews do not think it is Jesus. If I understand correctly, Muslims believe those figures, along with Mohammed, point to God. There is no need for a savior. Christians, however, believe that Adam, Abraham, Moses, and all other Biblical figures point to our need for a savior. They point to Jesus and Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, points to Himself as humanity's only savior." Forty-five minutes later, with one of Lehigh's massive chalk boards covered in Biblical Theology, a look of understanding flashed across Balir's face.

In all my preparation for Lehigh's Large Group Meetings, I never thought I would be explaining the Bible to a Muslim man from Iran. Yet, here we were. As we left the building, I couldn't help but think of Jesus' words in John 12:32. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Was Jesus drawing Balir to himself? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain. Lehigh RuF's Large Group was providing the means to share the good news of Jesus with a Muslim man whose home was half-way around the world. *Michael Goodlin, Campus Minister at Lehigh University*

University of Vermont

This semester we've been looking at and listening to questions that God asks in the Bible. No doubt you have questions for God and about God, but God has questions for you and me, too. The very first question God asks in the Bible is, "Where are you?" God is pursuing you, me, and the students we serve – not to harm us, but to heal us ("Do you want to be healed?"). He wants to take away our shame ("Who told you that you are naked?") and give us a new identity ("What is your name?"). He longs to be reconciled to us ("Do you love me?") and make us ambassadors of His peace ("What is that in your hand?"). In sum, He is inviting us all into a renewed relationship with Him ("What are you seeking?") and then sending us out on His gospel mission ("Who will go for us?"). This is the dialogue and drama that is happening at the University of Vermont this semester, thanks in large part to the support we receive from RuF supporters like you. On behalf of us all, thank you! *John Meinen, Campus Minister at the University of Vermont*



Large Group Meeting at the University of Vermont

Your Connection to RuF

Each week on campuses where there is an RuF ministry our campus ministers preach the gospel to college students hungry for Jesus. Your donations enable them to do this work, and your prayers make their ministry effective. Thank you for sharing this ministry with us!

As you make your year-end donations, please give an extra gift to your favorite RuF minister. You can make donations to our ministry here: <https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. → Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at Northeast@ruf.org.



Prayer during the Large Group Meeting at Penn State

Advent Reflections

We sing, Immanuel, Thy praise,
Thou Prince of Life and Fount of grace,
Thou Flower of heaven and Star of morn,
Thou Lord of lords, Thou Virgin-born.

For Thee, since first the world was made,
So many hearts have watched and prayed;
The patriarchs' and prophets' throng
For Thee have hoped and waited long.

From Thee above all gladness flows,
Yet Thou must bear such bitter woes;
The Gentiles' Light and Hope Thou art,
Yet findest none to soothe Thine heart.

– Paul Gerhardt, 1653



Paul Gerhardt celebrates Immanuel so artistically, "Thou Flower of heaven and Star of morn." Yet Jesus was born a poor peasant baby and was not handsome by human reckoning. For centuries many hearts watched and prayed, but when Immanuel showed up, he was not what they expected. In the end He was rejected by

those who sought His coming.

May we find the beauty of Christmas not in the glamor of the holiday, but that God not disdaining this wretched world, came among us to save us from our sins. May we follow His example this season by bringing Light and Hope to those weighed down by bitter woes.

David Green