



NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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Delighting in God's Word

In the early years of RUF at Lehigh University, the president of the group, Seamas Whitesel, welcomed everyone to our large group meeting by saying, "RUF is a ministry focused on the word of God." I didn't tell him to say that, and I can't recall ever using that phrase around Seamas. But he saw by our constant use of the Bible that RUF is indeed a ministry focused on the word of God. Psalm 119 explains why.

Your testimonies are my delight;
they are my counselors.
My soul clings to the dust;
give me life according to your word!
Psalm 119:24-25

We read the Bible because it delights us. We study scripture because it teaches us how to live. And most of all, we find life and hope when God speaks to us in His word. Read on to hear stories of how God is speaking to students through his word across the Northeast.

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### He Skipped the Best Part

Every Tuesday night, a group of college freshman come together to "explore Christianity." Once a week they gather around God's word in a small University of Vermont (UVM) classroom, asking and answering questions that get straight to the heart of Christian spirituality: "Who is God? Who are we? What is sin? What is faith?" And so on.

Four weeks into the semester we read and discussed Genesis 3. At this Bible study we talked a lot about sin and its consequences; we also discussed God's response to human sin. In this passage God does three amazing things: 1) He goes seeking when we go hiding (Gen. 3:8-9); 2) He spills the blood of an innocent in order to cover our nakedness and shame (Gen. 3:21); and 3) He promises to send a Rescuer (Gen. 3:15). As God's good world begins to fall apart in real time, and darkness closes in, God graciously promises that it will not always be so. He speaks words of promise; He speaks words of hope. Someday a child of Eve will crush the head of the serpent, ending evil once and for all. And yet...and yet...this Child, this Rescuer, this Promised One is going to get wounded in the process. I explained to the students that this verse, Gen. 3:15, is one of the most important in the Bible—that in so many ways, the rest of the Bible is simply the unpacking of this particular promise. "What child is this?"

"Wow," said Lauren, a first-year student and religious studies major at UVM. Lauren had read bits and pieces of the Bible before, but this was all brand new to her.

A couple weeks later, Lauren approached me after Bible study. "We read Genesis 3 in class today," she exclaimed.

"Oh?" I said. "How'd it go?"

"Pretty good," she said. "It was really cool to be talking about it there, seeing as how we just talked about it here. But," she said with a funny smile on her face, "our professor skipped the best part!"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Genesis 3:15! He didn't say anything about it. I mean, how could you miss that? That's the most important part!"

My smile matched hers. Even though her professor "skipped the best part," the good news of the gospel was not being missed on Lauren. She was getting it! She is getting it still, every Tuesday night, at a RUF Bible study at the University of Vermont. *John Meinen, Campus Minister at University of Vermont*



Bible Study at Rhode Island School of Design

### Fighting for Friendship

Small groups are not only a way for students to engage the Bible, they are also a crucial means of forming and maintaining relationships. PITT is a hard place to make friends. It's a hard place to keep up with friends. I encourage my freshmen that if they want friendships, they have to pull out their phones and schedule meetings with their friends. This is simply the context in which relationships have to be fought for on our urban, fractured campus.

In this context, regular small group meetings have become a vital way for our students to connect meaningfully with others. This semester two individuals have connected to our RUF so strongly through their small group

involvement that they've both committed to going on our Spring Break mission trip to Belize in March. It is easy, sometimes, to think of small groups as an activity that is supplemental to our large group meetings for teaching and singing. But in reality, they are equally indispensable, meeting different needs, and often reaching different individuals. *Derek Bates, Campus Minister at University of Pittsburgh*



Lehigh University Bible Study Leaders-in-Training  
Campus Minister Scott Mitchell front center

### Giving Jesus to Students

We've had several new freshmen and transfer students connect with RUF this fall. One couple, Matt and Noelle, starting attending our south campus Bible study. Matt and Noelle loved the study and would talk to one another about how encouraging it was for them. The study was being led by future RUF intern Jason Neeves as well as our current first year Intern Billy Jacobson. Billy had an exciting conversation with Matt this week. Here are Billy's reflections on their conversation:

"I had a student today tell me that through the Bible studies I've led and through my sermon he has finally been learning that he cannot gain God's favor through his works, but only through Jesus' work. He admitted that he was becoming exhausted trying to work for God's love. He said that now he is finally grasping the love of God and how he is complete because of Jesus. He then said, 'I'm finally understanding 'faith alone.'"

"You guys, my keyboard is soaked with tears of joy as I write this. What a huge encouragement. I'm so excited to continue to give these students Jesus." *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*



University of Maryland Bible Study  
Intern Billy Jacobson far left

### Surprise Bible Study

Coming into this Fall, I really had no aspirations of starting or hosting a Bible study for Columbia students this semester. As a new campus minister attempting to fund-raise, study for ordination, and build a ministry with only a handful of contacts, I figured that this semester would mainly involve getting to know students so that we could hopefully launch a small group or two for the Spring. Sure, I'd be engaging students one-on-one with the word, but having a consistent, committed small group so early on seemed a bit ambitious.

However, in one of my first coffee dates a senior girl asked if I would lead a Bible study for her and some friends. I happily agreed, and the result (by God's grace) was a group of 5-7 students showing up at our apartment every Thursday night to eat dessert and work through the Old Testament, trying to understand how that Story makes sense of our individual stories and points us to Jesus. This time was consistently one of the highlights of my week, and a tremendous indication of God's faithfulness in building his kingdom at Columbia! *Eric Lipscomb, Campus Minister at Columbia University*

### Big News at Delaware State

In this first semester at Delaware State University, perhaps the biggest news about our Bible Studies is that there is in fact a Bible Study! During our short time together, we have seen friendships grow, people come to understand the gospel for the first time, and also understand it in a much deeper way. However, perhaps the most surprising person who has changed is me! In teaching the word on such a regular basis, the preparation and the thought that goes into these studies has really served to change me and make me think more deeply about the word itself and the students I am presenting it to.

Students want answers! Students want to know you care! Students want you to be on time! Most of all... students need you to be their friend. It amazes me that most of the



close friendships I have developed here have been my students. One of my students even moved into my house! As time passes it is my hope that Bible studies would remain a primary way students, and even campus ministers, would encounter Jesus at DSU. *Daryl Wattley, Campus Minister at Delaware State University*



Boston University Community Group packing shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child.  
Campus Minister Nathan Dicks front, second from right.

## Your Connection with RUF

Occasionally God brings to campus a student who is gifted to organize and lead a Bible study. But to maintain a consistent ministry of Bible studies all over campus year after year requires steady training and assistance from our campus ministers. God uses your partnership with RUF ministers to enable these Bible studies to thrive.

Thank you for your support of RUF through your prayers and donations. As you make your year-end donations, please remember RUF. As with many ministries, we depend heavily on year-end contributions

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.



Remember to visit our RUF Northeast web site! Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this code →



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org).

And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org).

## Christmas Reflections

O Savior of our fallen race,  
O Brightness of the Father's face,  
O Son who shared the Father's might  
Before the world knew day or night,

And we are jubilant today,  
For you have washed our guilt away.  
Oh, hear the glad new song we sing  
On this, the birthday of our king!

– Latin office hymn, c. 6<sup>th</sup> cent.;  
trans. Gilbert E. Doan b. 1930



On December 2 we saw this headline: "Atheists Target Churchgoers With 'Christmas Is a Fairy Tale' Billboards." Some Christians will no doubt respond in anger, some in pity, but I wonder, why do they bother? Why do atheists care so much?

Of course in a sense Christmas *is* a fairy tale. As C. S. Lewis would say, Christmas is the *true* fairy tale. It's the tale of a world gone horribly wrong, a noble race fallen into unspeakable corruption – the wickedness of power-hungry politicians, jihadist murderers, sex traffickers, and the general disappointment of failing to live up to our potential. It's the tale of a new world breaking into this one, a bright Son of the Heavenly Father come to rescue us – born a baby, living as our servant, dying as a criminal, and risen in the brightness of the Father's glory.

The good news of Christmas is that the baby born in a stable became the Savior who washed all our guilt away. The bad news for atheists is that their guilt remains. This is very bad, distressing news – and as Paul told us in Romans, unbelievers are driven to suppress this fact.

But let's not let a few sourpusses dampen our enthusiasm. The best response to the atheist message is to party on, celebrating our salvation from the tyranny of sin and the joyous beginning of a bright new world. And if we invite those atheists to join us, perhaps they will change their tune.