



Preaching and Living the Gospel



Senior Joey Barnet started college at the University of Maryland in the midst of a serious relationship with a girl from his hometown of Silver Spring, MD (just blocks from D.C.). A few years before, Joey had become a Christian after regularly attending his girlfriend's church. However, their theological views had drifted apart,

and when they broke off their four-year relationship, Joey was left with few friends, having poured so much into this one relationship. At this time he knew he was in desperate need of Christian community and found his way to a different Christian group on campus.

But God drew Joey to RUF through persistent invitations from his lab partner and other "coincidences." In the fall of his junior year, Joey finally checked out an RUF Large Group meeting and was initially struck by the importance given to the Word over games and activities. Campus minister Chris Garriott's preaching resonated deeply with Joey as Chris expounded on the book of Exodus, always pointing back to Christ. Joey was hooked.

Since then, Joey has joined the Large Group worship team and ministry team. He spends time promoting RUF events and mentoring freshmen. Nonetheless, he claims, "I haven't served RUF nearly as much as it's served me." Joey especially finds it rejuvenating to attend Large Group mid-week and hear a second sermon for the week. It helps him to handle the pressures of a secular campus with an environment often antagonistic to the Gospel.

While the messages stand out, Joey also appreciates the friendly atmosphere at the Large Group meetings, where students continue to hang out at the end. Joey describes the group as discerning of when to be serious and when to have fun. He has seen grace at work in this context, both for himself as well as others. At one meeting, a new student spouting anti-Christian sentiments during announcements received a gracious response from regular Large Group attendees. Joey observes how this response re-

flected the grace God extends to all who are lost.

This semester Chris Garriott has used the Large Group format to discuss relationships. Joey acknowledges that he had idolized his previous girlfriend and recognizes the importance of both people making their relationship with Christ primary when it comes to future dating relationships. When Joey meets with younger students, he reminds them of Chris' advice and shares his own mistakes in dating as a cautionary tale.

Joey knows that the wisdom he has gleaned from Chris' preaching will stick with him beyond RUF at Maryland. To that end, last year's Large Group series on work/vocation taught Joey that he can glorify God in any calling – not just vocational ministry. While doing research with a Christian professor who questioned his calling to teach at a secular university, Joey encouraged the fellow believer with the truth he had learned at Large Group. For himself, Joey hopes to go to medical school after graduating, but he is also considering doing an RUF internship, trusting he can serve Christ in either way.

– by Kristen Flores

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What is authentic Christianity – correct doctrine, or a life of discipleship? What is true Christian ministry – preaching the gospel, or loving people? Of course the answer is both – you cannot separate God's word from obedience to God's word. The difficulty is staying robust in doctrine *and* energetic in mission.

RUF aims to be strong both in doctrine and mission, and the center of our ministry is the Large Group Meeting. The Large Group Meeting is the public face of RUF. It is where our campus minister preaches the gospel every week, and where visitors can see students acting in ways that demonstrate the truth of that word. As Joey discovered, in RUF's Large Group Meeting people both hear the message of grace, and also see grace at work.

Following you can see grace at work in the Large Group Meetings of RUF ministries across the Northeast.

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New York City

After being in the book of Revelation last semester, we felt it was important to get back to the basics of the gospel by going through the book of Mark this semester in large group. This past Wednesday we were in Mark Chap-

ter 16 talking about resurrection and there were many teary eyes as we talked about our future hope of a world that is fixed and redeemed. That while it might not be well with our bodies right now, it is well with our souls because the resurrection is real. This was just the message our burned-out New York City students needed to hear. That despite their failings, and the failings of the world, they are not lost, and the world is not lost, as it will be redeemed again. *Michael Keller, Campus Minister in New York City*



New York RUF Large Group Meeting

Penn State University

This semester RUF at Penn State has been going through the Gospel of Luke. Most fall semesters I go through a gospel, but this was my first time going through Luke. We have seen over and over how Jesus is bringing his kingdom – and how he intends to use his people to bring it! We have seen that Jesus is often scandalous in his extension of grace to those who do not deserve it. When he extends his grace to Zacchaeus, he might as well extend it to Jerry Sandusky!

So far the most feedback that I have received from any one sermon came when teaching on Luke 20 where Jesus says, “Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” This provided a good opportunity to follow up with students what it means to follow Jesus with our civil obedience so long as the two do not contradict each other. If anything, going through Luke has shown us that Jesus shows us what God is like. When Jesus surprises us or frustrates our conception of God, he showing us that we do not know God as well as we think – and we should listen to him. *Joe Dentici, Campus Minister at Penn State University*



Penn State RUF Large Group Meeting

Lehigh University

At Lehigh RUF’s large group meetings this semester I preached through the gospel according to Mark. Actually, every fall semester I preach through a gospel account. There are two primary reasons I do so: first, postmodern students are drawn to stories, and the gospel accounts vividly illustrate Jesus’ story; second, through the gospel accounts we gain unique insight into both the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

One thing that makes the gospels “easy” to preach is that they show what Jesus loves. For instance, in Mark 2:27 Jesus states, “And he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.’” In this passage Jesus clearly values us more than our rule-keeping, and he desires our rest – for our good. As I preached this passage, I emphasized how Jesus wants good for us, and this good includes rest. This spurred two students in the ministry to work even harder throughout the week so that they could truly rest on Sundays, doing no school or work, prioritizing rest for body and soul. I’m immensely thankful for how God has used the preached word at Lehigh to transform, through the Spirit, lives of young men and women. *Scott Mitchell, Campus Minister at Lehigh University*

Harvard University

At Harvard I preached through the gospel of Luke. We have the challenge of working within the academic calendar, and so one of the interesting choices was which passages in this long gospel to choose. We chose to emphasize passages that demonstrate the power of Christ and his kingdom. These passages allow us to consider the significance of what we do on campus and why we do it. They let us marvel – that’s a key term in Luke! – at Jesus. They teach us courage because this kingdom will not fail, as well as humility because this kingdom was built on the work of Christ. Many of my discussions with students have been sparked or come back around to what we’ve been studying in Luke. *Jeremy Mullen, Campus Minister at Harvard University*

University of Connecticut

Throughout my time at UConn, it has always been a struggle to build community among the students that attend our large group. We have often gathered great groups of students, but they have not always connected well to each other, and our large group has sometimes felt more like a chapel service than a community gathering. This semester, we decided to force students to interact a bit by starting off every large group with a “would you rather” question for students to discuss with each other (e.g. would you rather know WHEN you were going die, or HOW you were going to die?). After a short time of discussion, students with the best arguments make their case before we take a final vote. This has been a simple way to encourage our students to get to know one another and has helped a great deal with the overall feel of our gatherings.

It is fun, light-hearted, and a perfect way to draw us together before we begin to worship together, and then hear God's Word. *Lucas Dourado, Campus Minister at University of Connecticut*



University of Connecticut RUF Large Group Meeting

Brown University/Rhode Island School of Design

In our Friday night large group gatherings, we have been doing a series called *The Bible in a Nutshell*. We want to help our students see the broad themes of scripture, in addition to the chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse style of study we have been doing in gatherings the last ten years since I started. The title is pithy. Really, it is for us to think on the central points of covenant theology as a community, including God's never-ending faithfulness to the church, his people in all times and all places. *Eddie Park, Campus Minister at Brown University/RISD*

University of Maryland

How would you react if extreme Muslim militants kidnaped you in your home with AK 47's? That very situation happened to a former Wycliffe Missionary who spent 30 years doing Bible translation work in the Philippines. Our RUF Large group hosted a missions event combined with the Navigators and Young Life called "Beyond the Campus Walls." Our goal was to help students expand their vision for career missions and to consider the work of Bible translation in the many cultures which do not have access to the Scriptures in their native tongue.

Due to the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, the two days with our friend Chuck W. could not have been more timely. Chuck shared about his work in linguistics and Bible translation for 30 years and wove in a story of God's amazing protection and deliverance for him as he spent some 28 days in captivity in a remote jungle setting in the early 90's. We heard first hand how God was at work even in the most trying of times and how his Holy Spirit gave a calming presence when he was at the end of his rope. Chuck presented a special emphasis on how the Word of God brought overwhelming peace and hope to him as he meditated on the Psalms.

I was especially excited that several linguistic students came to our follow up lunch with Chuck the next day. The

girl that brought them is a fringe student to our group whom I just "happened" to run into the day before and invited to the event. This girl came to both sessions and heard the gospel in word and song. Please pray for our follow up with her. To hear the full of Chuck's deliverance you can find our podcast at www.marylandruf.org. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*



University of Maryland RUF Large Group Meeting

Your Connection with RUF

Joey Barnet, the fringe student at the University of Maryland, and the students at all these other schools are hearing the gospel every week and being embraced by the gospel as it is lived by their classmates. RUF Large Group Meetings are where the power of the gospel is most potently preached and demonstrated.

One reason for the effectiveness of our Large Group Meetings is the skill of our campus ministers. Seminary trained, diligently selected, and carefully placed – RUF campus ministers are the primary means God uses to reach students on our campuses. But ministry of this caliber is not cheap, and it takes the support of many churches and individuals to keep RUF going.

Thank you for your support of RUF through your prayers and donations! As you make your year-end donations, please remember RUF campus ministers. 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.

And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at Northeast@ruf.org.

Advent Reflections

Jesus, Thy Church with longing eyes
For Thine expected coming waits:
When will the promised Light arise,
And glory beam from Zion's gates?

E'en now, when tempests round us fall,
And wintry clouds o'er-cast the sky,
Thy words with pleasure we recall,
And deem that our redemption's nigh.

Come, gracious Lord, our hearts renew,
Our foes repel, our wrongs redress,
Man's rooted enmity subdue,
And crown Thy Gospel with success.

O come, and reign o'er every land;
Let Satan from his throne be hurled.
All nations bow to Thy command,
And grace revive a dying world.

– William Hiley Bathurst, 1318



"In the spring of 1315 unusually heavy rain began in much of Europe. It continued to rain throughout the spring and summer, and the temperature remained cool" causing widespread crop failures. The Great Famine continued through the next two years until an estimated 10-25% of the population of the towns and cities of

Europe perished. Conditions were so terrible that some people were driven to cannibalism.¹ It is no wonder that in 1318 William Hiley Bathurst wrote "Jesus, Thy Church with longing eyes/For Thine expected coming waits." When there is no food, people are starving to death, and no solution is in sight, only God's grace can revive a dying world.

The 14th century was horrible in many ways. The papacy was in crisis and moved to Avignon, France, for much of the century. The Hundred Years' War with England ravaged much of France, and the black death killed one third of the population. It sounds a lot like the 21st century, doesn't it?

¹ Wikipedia;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_of_1315%E2%80%9317

Advent is the season in which we remember the long waiting for the Savior of our race – four thousand years of longing for the Child who would crush the serpent's head and restore paradise. Advent is also the season in which we express our own longing for the return of Christ. Jesus opened the way to paradise, but we have yet to enter. We feel these are days "when tempests round us fall,/And wintry clouds o'er-cast the sky."

Our world is filled with crazy people. People who are not just different, but certifiably crazy. People who kill in the name of religion, people who kill for fun, people who kill for no reason. And people who talk, and think that their words will somehow change things. People who preach because they are crazy enough to think it makes a difference.

What should we do in a world filled with terrorists and mass murderers and ISIS and nations at war with each other? What can solve our problems and bring peace? Paul said, "...it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21) Paul admitted it – it is crazy to think that preaching will solve anything – except, it does! This is why in RUF we preach this gospel, this power of salvation, every week in our Large Group meetings.

We can be sure that Satan *will* be dethroned, all nations *will* bow before Jesus, and the gospel *will* succeed in all the earth. Therefore, this Advent season we pray, "Come, gracious Lord, our hearts renew." Cause us to hope again in the gospel. Enable us in this day to celebrate your first coming, and prepare us for your second coming. Amen.

David Green



Preaching at the RUF Mid-Atlantic Fall Retreat