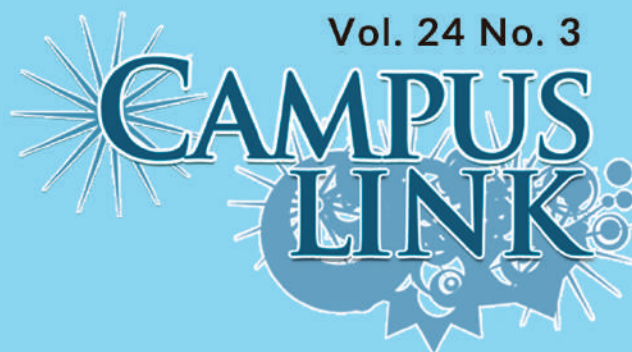


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Campus Engagement



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Intentional Influence

Guest Editorial

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"

- **Abraham Kuypers**

Throughout the Bible, we see God actively involved in all the affairs of the entire universe and there is no dichotomy between spiritual and secular! "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him" (Col.1:16). The compartmentalization happened due to sin, but God is at work to redeem it back to His original design.

Jesus is the best model to emulate as he was involved in every aspect of life yet stood out. He had a holistic approach to the needs around him. And his prayer for the disciples at the end of His earthly mission is remarkable! "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (Jn.17:16). A call to be in the world but not of the world!! Now we are His agents sent to be the salt and light in this decaying world.

Daniel and his friends in the Old Testament got involved in all the aspects of administrative training at the University of Babylon yet stood out for their convictions. Students are the influencers on the campuses and there is a great need to make an impact in every spectrum of campus life. UESI's vision, "Transformed students impacting the campuses and nation as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ" and the third aim, 'To raise a testimony in the colleges to the truths of the historic Christian faith, and to present its message for the whole of life and the problems of mankind' reinforces it. Hence students are called to be the salt and light on the campuses engaging holistically without compartmentalizing faith and lifestyle. It calls for permeating the campuses like salt (not seen vividly yet felt its absence) by the active involvement in all aspects of campus life yet standing out as light.

I invite you to explore more on the theme by the thought-provoking writers who will take us through different perspectives.



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Impacting the Campuses

The vision of UESI has steered our path to the university campuses of India for the past many years. We stress on our focused ministerial approach and we talk big about our time-tested approaches to reach the university campuses. We celebrate almost 70 years of our presence in India and especially in the Indian universities. However, if we take the university and the nation as a whole, the 'impacting' part of our vision is still blurred. Except for few individual success stories; we as a movement are not making a significant impact on the university campuses of our nation. To some extent, we are successful in 'students reaching students,' but the challenge before us is 'engaging the whole university. Our zeal to evangelise the university students has made our approach largely

people-centric, while we have neglected to influence the whole system, called 'university,' where students live, think, learn, and their personalities are moulded and nurtured. Our past attempts were limited to critiquing and countering the harmful and the 'unbiblical' endeavours of the university, but we seldom appreciate the beneficial undertakings of these knowledge societies. Our relationship with the university is rather unfriendly and unsupportive. Our evangelisation attempts at the university can be tagged as 'sheep-stealing'. We've given back to the university rather a few Christian personals, those who can influence and transform the existing system with their Christian convictions. Our Christian personals at the university, both students and professors, are rather strong in

Lead

their Christian doctrines but they are less equipped to articulate their Christian faith amidst the ever-changing culture at the university. Engaging the whole university is to bring Christ and His teaching into what all university is, does and prospects. In the changing socio-political scenario of our nation, it is a real challenge to engage the whole university. Yet our vision compels us to focus on the 'impacting' part during our presence on the campuses. To make this necessary shift; we have to correct our approach, bring change in our outlook, and rework our teaching methods.

In 2007, at the World Assembly in Toronto, Canada, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the IFES movement; the then IFES General Secretary Daniel Bourdanne challenged to take the world of the university seriously. He gave an illustration of the university as an 'ecosystem of a lake'.

He suggested that the university student ministry should concern itself not with how just to get fish from the lake, but instead reach out to the whole ecosystem of the lake.

In UESI, our attempts are: to pull the fishes out of the lake, count them, train them to live in the aquarium called 'EU', make them busy with

many inward-looking events, and on occasions send them into the lake to bring more fishes from the lake. In all these, the lake remains untouched. Daniel suggested that the university student ministry is not about catching fish, but also about studying the ecology of the lake, cleaning up its polluted waters, and making it more conducive to the flourishing of marine and plant life. We throw the fish back into the lake, equipped to engage in transforming the ecosystem of the lake.

We have to correct our approach in the way we get involved with the university. 'Catching' or 'stealing' students and professors from the university and nurturing them in the aquariums called 'EU' and 'EGF' will make our Christian personals alien to the university. Apart from their academics, they feel incompatible in their universities. Conversely, the universities consider them incongruent in their system due to their exclusive faith claims. Therefore, the universities and our Christian personals are outfacing each other when it comes to the matters of principles and values. Our Christian personals feel off-guard to impact what a university is, does and prospects: teaching, curriculum, research, social and political engagement, the

classroom and all the supporting facets of a university administration.

The most prevalent response in such a situation is; that students and professors make their Christian faith as personal affairs and not articulate it in the university affairs. They have a limited engagement with the university. Therefore, students and faculty's gifts and scholarships are overlooked to advance the Kingdom of God in the university. The university student ministry exists in the margin while the centre of the university remains untouched. Another standard response is sharing the Good News about Jesus Christ in personal conversations or vocally in public events. In these evangelistic efforts, we win few people for Christ yet the heart of what the university is and does remains untouched. In this model, there is no connection between the Christian faith and the curriculum or the research agendas or the university's conversation in the public sphere. We lose those students who question the relevance of Christian faith with what we study, what university does, what research is all about etc. The third celebrated response is a defensive and reactive apologetic model. This model identifies those academic or moral developments in the university that threatens the Christian faith; find Christian

persons from inside or outside of academia who have authority to appraise and to apprise such threats, inviting such persons to mount a defence within the university or to equip students, graduates or staff workers with strategies or books or materials that convey authoritative defence. This model goes into the centre of the university, and touches what the university does: the curriculum, critical thinking etc.; however, due to its basic orientation, it aggressively defends the Christian faith and creates a 'we and you' air within the campus. It is not supportive to the beneficial endeavours of the university and doesn't celebrate God's wonder that happens within the university: like in literature, history, nanotechnology, post-colonialism, ethnomusicology, economics, biotechnology etc.

Terance Halliday and Vinoth Ramchandran propose the dialogic model of ministry where the Christian personals enter into conversation with the university. It engages the mind on both sides. According to Halliday,

"We are called, first, to think "Christianly" about everything that goes on in the university. We are called, second, to enter into conversations with all others on the campus—undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff. These are conver-

Lead

sations about the issues the university is thinking about and the curriculum the university is teaching. These are conversations or dialogs that are infused by faith.”

Ramchandran states that the university ministry is a distinctive calling. He advocates that the dialogic model comprehensively reaches to all that university is, does and prospects in teaching, research, administration, social and political engagement in the public sphere etc. The light of Christ touches every corner of the university. It respects the intellectual gifts of the students and faculty, celebrates the university’s beneficial endeavours, listens carefully to carry on respectful conversations, and touches the heart of the university. It brings students and faculty to the frontiers and prepares them for the positions of leadership not just in their profession, but in society, in government, in public service, in the corporate sector, in the market, and in media. Such thoughtful conversations bring the Christian values, Christian teachings, and ultimately Christ back to the world of university.

The ministerial approach of Paul illustratively demonstrates traits of the dialogic approach. Paul usually starts with the proper study of the system of the city (Acts 17:16; 1

Cor. 2:1-5); finding the core issue that pollutes the ecosystem of that city (Acts 13:6-8; 17:16, 24; 19:24-27); than starts conversations with the people through preaching (Acts 13:16-41; 22:1-21) or public lecture (Acts 17:22-31; 19:9-10) or living witness (1 Thess. 2:9); bringing Christ and Christian values into conversations and making attempts to clean the waters (Acts 14:14-17; 17:23, 29-31; 19:26); later hand over the matters to the church to continue their engagement and impact to transform the ecosystems of their cities. Paul through personal inquiries, prayers and writing letters further equipped the churches for their continuous witness and impact in their cities.

Alike any other approach, it is imperative to train our Christian university personnel for the dialogic ministry. UESI has to involve in surveys and research to study the culture of the university; to appraise modes of teaching and training; use the common resources to build a bridge of conversations; making the Christian faith relevant to what the university is and does. We have to bring findings of survey and research, issues of academia, society and politics into our believers and graduate Bible study cells, discipleship and leadership training camps, study centres,

graduate conferences etc. for discussion and deliberation, to find out the relevance of our Christian faith into those issues, to train our students to initiate and involve into conversations actively and courageously in their campuses.

Students and professors can use their expertise to study their campus and university affairs; find the polluting factors that affect the ecosystem of the university; prayerfully and wisely start conversations through

all possible means, like starting classroom discussions, writing in magazines or on college display boards, participating in debates and open forums, raising pertaining issues regarding curriculum, research, administration, hostel etc. In all these matters students and professors start thinking 'Christianly' and courageously engage in dialogues to bring Christ back to their campuses and to make the university and its affairs more humane and just.



Ankit L. Harry, was Staff Worker with UESI Gujarat for 18 years. Currently he is working as an Assistant Professor at Allahabad Bible Seminary. He is also serving as Chairperson of SPEC in UESI-UP.

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Being Salt & Light on Campus

How to stay relevant

University life is perhaps, the most dynamic chapter of a student's life. For many young people passing out of school and moving on to college feels like being freed into a world of independence! And so, 'live life to the fullest' seems to be the slogan. In every sense, this is the most impressionable stage.

But as time goes by, most students end up chasing datelines or caught up between assignments and examinations – like a different level of rat race for "good grades". Sometimes, it can be like you're pushed into a meaningless pursuit of a degree because without it you can't get a job! But is that all? Is life all about scoring good grades, getting a job and settling down?

Through this article I wish to press home the point that there's life beyond individual quests, and true fulfilment is when you realize the purpose of a greater call as human beings. And this is more pertinent to Christians because the Bible tells us that we are to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world", as we read from Matthew 5: 13-16 (*please read*). Articulated in the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, this portion lays stress on

"how to" live as Jesus' disciples – living out the Gospel in the world. By using the metaphors of "salt" and "light" Jesus is implying that his disciples are to possess the same nature or qualities of the salt and light. Let's quickly look at some of the distinctiveness of the two metaphors in discussion.

Qualities of salt: *Salt penetrates* and is essential to enhance the taste of food (adds flavour). And in the ancient Greco-Roman world salt was considered to possess some "divine" quality, as that of the sun. *Salt preserves* (from decadence). It is the most common preservatives in many cultures (now we have refrigerators!). *Salt purifies* (heals), even though it hurts when you rub it to a wound to heal. In the Old Testament it is also symbolic of God's presence/activity in a person's life ("everlasting covenant of salt" [Num. 18: 19]; "add salt to all your offerings" [Lev. 2: 13]). The Bible commentator William Barclay says that Christians are to be "the antiseptic influence on life", that is, we are called to preserve the culture from decadence. ***The underlining principle here is that we are called to be the salt that adds flavour to the world around, preserves the***

goodness to life and heal the world through our actions.

We can effectively be the salt that God wants us to be by being what the salt does best – dissolve/penetrate. No one eats chunks of salt in the curry, do we? Likewise, we're also expected to penetrate and let others feel our presence and influence the world through our life. That is such a contrasting idea as compared with what the world says because it's a call to live a counter-cultural lifestyle.

Qualities of light: Light *dispels darkness* – the first you do when you enter a dark room is grope for the switch! Light is *meant to be seen* – that's why Jesus said a lit lamp is not put under a bowl (5: 15). And light *shows the way* – it's meant to let passersby see the passage clearly. But we must first understand that we do not produce light. Only God does! Jesus says in John 8: 12, "... I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." And later, he also said in John 9: 5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." So, now that Jesus is not physically with us, we, his disciples, are to be his representatives. We are to reflect his light through our lives. It's a tough call, but that is the truth to be imbibed.

Now, what do we do with this light? Verses 5: 14b-15a says that we can either let it shine for others to see or hide it and dim it! ***The underlining principle here is that when the truth of Jesus illuminates our life, we have the duty to shine the same light for others!*** When people see you as a person who is genuine, unpretentious, morally sound, honest, and living a life of integrity, you shine the light of Jesus! But then, quite often, it also happens that we end up hiding out light – when you are quiet when we should speak or do things because everyone else is doing, even at the point of compromising lifestyle. And it is also when we allow sin rule our life – this can also be in subtle ways – complacency, resentment, anger, stubbornness, disobedience, etc. There's an interesting book titled *Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins we Tolerate* by Jerry Bridges that covers this aspect which you might want to check out!

But the basis to do all these is "that they [people] may see the good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (5: 16 b). This is the key verse! The reason we are to be salt and light is for God's glory. Note that the stress in this portion is how our good deeds – our action and our life – should point others to God. As disciples of Jesus, we are to be different by the way we live.

When they see you different, they will want to know what makes you different. That's when you can tell them about how God changed your lives. So, how do you live out your life at your place of stay or campus? The question that I would like to pose is – are Christians able to make the impact they should in these areas?

Os Guinness, in his book *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, (1998), makes an interesting statement – “The problem with [...] Christians is not that they aren't where they should be but that they aren't what they should be where they are.” In other words, it's not about whether you're in the right place or not (because you already are) but whether we are what we are called to be!

Christians have a call beyond individuals, that is a holistic focus on the whole of university life. And so, for Christian missions to have the right impact, I suggest the following:

A. Reimagine and re-evaluate the idea of “mission” (on campus):

Understandably, the spread of Christianity throughout the modern world is largely driven by the word “mission”. However, in the last few centuries, the Christian mission is chiefly centered on “evangelism”, more specifically the Western world

evangelizing the rest of the world. But of late, as far as I understand, there has been a shift in this understanding, primarily with the decline of Christianity in the West and the rise of it in the Global South. I think there is a critical need to look into our understanding of “mission” so that it is holistic in the biblical sense, and not just be limited to personal (human) evangelism. We need to understand that the Christian mission should broaden to include how we relate to God's creation beyond human beings and that God's redemptive plan includes restoring the world back to his original plan. Often, our overzealous effort to ‘win’ someone for Christ can lead to a suspicion because it tends to picturize the idea of ‘poaching’ unbelievers. The constant use of dichotomy in our language - saved/unsaved, light/darkness, etc. can often put off conversations because it has a tendency to assert a superior idea of ‘righteousness’.

B. Engage and dialogue with the university life:

To engage and dialogue is to be involved with the issues that are raging in the campus. Often Christian missions end up being aloof or *uninvolved* – the danger of becoming exclusive – to discussions on campus. The point is not to pick

Christians out or away into a Christian group because you do “Bible study” or involve in a camp, etc.

To be salt and light on campus is to be engaging with the issues that are discussed in the class or at the university.

Perhaps, it would be helpful to ask questions like:

- Do you as Christian students stand up against social injustice or say join protests that are focused on larger social issue?
- How do you respond to the debates that are on campus – education, discrimination, caste, citizenship, sexuality, dating, etc.?
- How are you able to interject and influence the discussions in the class – on topics like gender, class, stereotypes, etc.? (Can those be chosen for assignment topics or presentation, given a chance?)

C. Redeeming the centres of learning:

The word “redeem” may seem quite out of place when one first thinks of universities, but that is because we tend to ghettoize that word

among the ‘Christian jargons’. But essentially, learning has a spiritual component to it, as Howard Peskett & Vinoth Ramachandra would put in their book *The Message of Mission* (2003), that “universities had their origin in the monasteries which were the centres of learning as well as prayer.” So, in a sense, there is a need to rethink the very purpose of the quest for knowledge. But this effort requires all those who are part of the university, not just students, to participate in engaging purposefully. There is a need to think Christian ministries on campus beyond student-centric models. In other words, Christians in the academia, students/scholars and faculty alike, ought to find ways to engage their own academic disciplines with a Christian perspective. I would like to see UESI and other student movements along this line. And to keep up with the changing time, there is also the need to network with like minded Christians in the university campuses to initiate conversations on a holistic understanding of the university in the society.



Veio Pou is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, lives with his wife Ashuni and two daughters, Debbie and Joy. He is the author of ‘Waiting for the Dust to Settle: A novel (2020)’ and ‘Literary Cultures of India’s Northeast: Naga Writings in English (2015)’. He likes to engage on various contemporary issues that relate to society, culture, and faith.





Your campus – why should you care ?

I have spent the last 36 years on college campuses – first as a student and later as a teacher. Over the years, I've had my view of the campus altered by God (primarily through His Word). What began as a place for me to get a degree and leave, has become my home! What began with a compartmentalized view - where my studies and my involvement in "God's work" were in separate compartments – has now changed to see all of my life on campus as doing God's work. The process has been slow, partly due to my slowness to grasp how God views my life and the campus, and partly because there was very little input into my life both before college and also during my college years regarding these matters. It was only after I left the country, during my PhD, that I came across the idea

that my work (studies) matters to God! I discovered that 'this is my Father's world', as the hymn writer puts it and so His Sovereignty runs through the whole of creation including my research! I began to realize that, while sharing the good news of the saving grace of Jesus was important work, so was my engineering. I could not miss classes to 'do God's work' – my being in class was 'doing God's work' in that time and place. Even today, many tend to take exception to the idea that faithfulness to their studies is as important as faithfulness to their involvement in the EU. The reason, as many others would agree and argue, is that we have this sort of a compartmentalized view that has to do with poor theology – a poor understanding of Scripture and of God! Of course, over the course

of history, many have grasped the relationship between the ordinariness of our lives and the extraordinariness of God's interest in it! To quote Abraham Kuiper (former prime minister of the Netherlands and a theologian), "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"

If that is true, then how should we as Christians live out our lives on our campuses? The particulars may (and actually, should) vary from campus to campus since each of our campuses is different. But the basic ideas remain the same. Does God have something to say about what is happening on our campus? Is the Bible relevant at all in our 21st century campuses? It is often amusing, but mostly depressing, to see how poorly understood the 3rd Aim of UESI is! At best, we seem to latch on to the phrase, "raise a testimony" and then instruct people on how to share their testimony on campus! That is so far from the intent of the 3rd Aim, for if that was indeed what our forefathers in UESI envisioned, then what do we do with the 1st Aim? The word, testimony, as used here is perhaps better understood as testimonial or remembrance or monument (thus, raise a testimony!). To what is the student or staff or graduate

called to raise a testimony? To the historic truths of the Christian faith – nothing fancy, nothing novel, nothing innovative – but the basic historic truths of the Christian faith! Our presence on campuses and our lives should cause people to know and understand what the gospel is! But we are not to stop there! We are then called to take those truths and apply them to the whole of life and the problems of mankind.

That brings me to two important issues. If we are to truly show that the Bible does have answers for the problems of mankind today, then first of all we need to know what those problems are!

How many of our fellowship students are really aware of the problems on their campuses?

What are the burning issues on your campus? Maybe we can talk about a few things that affect us personally. But do we really have our fingers on the pulse of the campus? How could we do that? Perhaps by reading the campus newspaper or blog and keeping an eye on the social media platforms. Even better, participate in these forums actively.

Secondly, in order to offer the solutions of Scripture to the problems of mankind (as manifested on campus), we need to be involved deeply in the lives of our fellow students

and colleagues. Let me ask you, how many really close friends do you have who are from another faith or do not profess any faith at all? Or do you avoid such friendships lest they influence you negatively?

One of the ways we can bring the solutions of Scripture to bear on our campus problems is by learning to speak about God without always mentioning the Bible. We use too much “Christianese” in our speech – terms and language that would sound strange to our friends! Another way is to really listen to what the other person is saying before we rush in with Scripture. We don’t need to use Biblical words or quote verses or mention God and Jesus in every conversation. But instead, we need to allow the wisdom of Scripture to seep into our lives (as we meditate on it) and then seep out of our lives into all the conversations around us. We need to learn to talk like Jesus did! We need to learn to enter into the homes and hearts of people like Jesus did! We need to offer grace and healing to others like Jesus did! The gospel should so permeate our lives that when people encounter us they should smell the aroma of Christ!

While this sounds fairly straightforward, there are many obstacles to our witness. Let me list a few:

- a) Poor witness academically: I find so many Christian students who don’t take their studies seriously or faculty members who fail to teach well or do good research, all the while busy with Bible studies, programs, committees, etc. Your voice cannot be heard when you seek to address issues on campus.
- b) Poor lifestyle: Many a student or faculty fails to find a voice to share because of his or her lifestyle! It is difficult to be prophetic when you are one with the world!
- c) Fear of rejection: Many a student or faculty succumbs to peer pressure due to fear of rejection. Our desire to be accepted and be part of the crowd overwhelms our desire to make a difference.
- d) No salt – no light: Many are unsure of their own faith! A shaky faith leads to shaky witness! If you do not have salt or light, how can you make sense of what Jesus is saying that you are the light of the world or the salt of the earth!
- e) Isolation in fellowship ‘ghettoes’: We often isolate ourselves with our Christian friends and fail to spend time with others and understand what is going on in their lives.

f) Poor readers –poor thinkers: Many of us do not really read much – at least not anything deep. Unless we develop the habit of serious reading, we will never develop as serious thinkers.

Let me close by offering a few practical suggestions. As students, seek to be involved in the academic life as well as in other areas like sports (on one campus, about half the football team including the captain were from the EU!), student government, music (participating in the College Fests), hostel life, etc. This calls for a sacrificial life – sacrifice of time and money! It calls for a listening ear – to hear the heartbeat of your campus. Also, here are some areas that you could grow in your understanding: Artificial Intelligence and the Christian faith, Economics and the Christian Faith, Policy Making, Sexuality, Mental Health/Suicide, Drugs and their impact.

As faculty, do good research that benefits society, choose research areas that have societal impact and relevance, have a sound work ethic, be a peacemaker, demonstrate humility rather than the arrogance so common in academia, especially when dealing with students, and colleagues, etc.

I fear to use the phrase, Engaging the Campus, for much has been written or spoken about it and it has almost become a buzz phrase! While dealing with our disciplines of study and addressing the structures of academia intellectually are important (and have been addressed by others), my experience shows that the problems of the campus are not always cerebral or intellectual. Thus, while we need to learn to look at our fields of study from a Biblical perspective and bring the gospel to bear on the academic structures of our disciplines, we should realize that the people we deal with on campus are just that – people! And they have similar issues like the rest of the world beyond the campus – fear, rejection, uncertainty, etc. The ideas in my colleague's head are important - but so is his headache. So, look at the campus and your studies through your mind, but do not forget to let your heart be touched by the brokenness around you. In offering the balm of the gospel, you will bring healing to your campus!

Here are some resources for further exploration. My listing them does not mean that I endorse everything on these sites or in these books. Use with discernment.

<https://tifwe.org/>
<https://tifwe.org/9-essential-points-on-the-theology-of-work/>
<https://www.theologyofwork.org/>
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-basics-of-a-biblical-theology-of-work/>
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<https://licc.org.uk/resources/what-is-a-whole-life-disciple/>
<https://licc.org.uk/ourresources/the-great-divide/>
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Themes for Campus Link - 2022



July-Aug 2022: Work vs Vocation

Articles to be submitted by 20th June 2022

Inside The Ring of Life



Life hits you hard each day. As a kid, there is not a stride you'd take without hopping or jumping. You are filled with exuberance, energy, and enthusiasm. The world was at your feet. But by the time you've entered your teens, life had already hooked you in the jaw. The spring in your step is gone; there is caution, a desperate desire to fit in, to be recognized. You already have your share of heartbreaks, sleepless nights, and nervous days. Pretty soon you realize that you may be the apple of the eye at home, but at school, you are perhaps a thorn in the side. Life had already gotten you by the scruff of your neck.

You'd crave a fresh start, dreaming about it; longing for it. "Freedom", you think for yourself, but as you enter college a few days into it and life pummels you again. You are thrown into an arena where everything is expected of you. You may have found *freedom* from the mom who peeps into your room

unannounced or the dad who constantly checks your browser history; but you are now observed by the world. You may not like it, but you end up taking sides; you cover for someone while you point fingers at someone else – pretty soon you realize that this *freedom* has come with a price – a price to please the rest of the world.

By the end of campus life, you'll be craving another fresh start, dreaming about it; longing for it. "Freedom", you think for yourself, but as you join your very first job, life kicks you in the gut again. That, my friends, is the nature of life. It throws at you all the weight it could gather and all the power it could muster. You cannot tame life you can only tire it.

While outwardly the campus is a diverse place, inwardly almost everyone is in that race, running to attain freedom that is always at a touching distance, but never reachable. Outwardly, it can be

very colorful but inwardly everyone grapples with the same dark desires of the flesh, which are blacker than the blackest night. Yes, in that superficial diversity there is an underlying unity.

But, believing Christians are a unique breed on the campus. They run a different race; not the one everyone else is thrown into. They have already attained a freedom that is so much greater than the freedom that everyone else is running after. There is an inherent calmness in them that fascinates the outside world. That incandescent light in them gives hope to those still indulging in the rat race. They engage even without trying to do so.

They are mastering the skill of tiring life. Life keeps hitting them, but their ears are tuned to their Trainer who is screaming at them from outside the ring; they dance to his tune. When he says, “duck”, they duck; when he says, “lunge”, they lunge. Their eyes may be on the opponent, but their ears are on the word; Listening carefully to each instruction and escaping the blows with grace. Without the **Trainer’s voice** the Christian is like a blind man boxing the wind.

There are times when life takes a breather from constantly aiming. That’s when the Christian retires to his corner and crouches onto his

seat. The Christian is well aware that stepping out of the ring would mean an immediate defeat. Though there is excitement outside the ring, the Christian is not interested in that. There are flashes and dances; screams and noises – but the Christian is on his seat still listening to his Trainer. That’s how **he relaxes in the quiet**. He does not wind off by taking his mind off circumstances, but he flies over the circumstances along with his Trainer and plugs in those weaknesses.

Inside the ring, the Christian floats. He is active, nimble and his movements are choreographic. The awkward person craves that gracefulness, and without a word being said, without any advertising, sits in the stands watching the Christian from afar as he negotiates life. A man who is tied to the world cannot be graceful, but for the Christian, the world is worth nothing, and therefore any value that the world puts on him amounts to nothing. Instead of fitting in with the crowd, he stands out from it.

While all the others try to do things to get recognized, the Christian gets recognition for who he is.

His life and attitude are often points of discussion, and sides are formed because of the Christian.

This Trainer-obeying, quietly-meditating, nimble-footed Christian sometimes get hit. Right below the jaw, a smashing upper-cut. That's when the crowd that has gathered opens their jaws wide and jumps from their seats. "Is he knocked out", they wonder. Some cheer for him to get up, but many want him to succumb. His eyes are moistened and his ears are ringing. His mind seems to be shutting down and the voice of the Trainer becomes a distant background. That's the deep dark valley of fear that all sheep of Christ walk through at one time or another. But that's when faith kicks in. The Trainer's voice might have died out in the ringing of his ears, but what he taught is safely inside. The Christian knows that the Trainer has faith in him; that he is prepared; that he is capable. Before the count is finished, he **stands up on faith**, and glares back at his opponent, ready to fight again. As he takes a few steps, the blurry vision becomes normal and the Trainer's voice is once again heard.

There are a few who cheer for the Christian, but there are many who jeer at him; he is sledged inside and mocked outside the

ring. Everything he stands for is made fun of. Everything he loves is ridiculed. Even his Trainer is not spared. But the Christian is **unprovoked**. He continues with his task as he always does. He utters no vulgarity despite being subjected to; issues no threats despite warned and threatened. Takes no step back despite pounced upon and shouted in the face. His resilience comes from his great Trainer; who is the expert at handling dissent and hatred. Moreover, the Christian rejoices in being trash-talked, counts it joy when he is cancelled. They'd done it with his Trainer; He expects no better.

The Christian is as engaging as it gets. As long as he listens to God, his Trainer, he can relax in quietness despite the chaos; as long as he is refreshed by that quietness, he can continue to be who he is; as long as he remains true to himself, he is unshaken on faith and as long as faith rules he remains unprovoked. Such a Christian engages without trying to engage and wins without playing. Such a Christian tires life and retires to his Savior's bosom once his job is done to hear him say, "well done my disciple, my friend".



Pradeep is passionate about bringing the Word of God to those who are in need of it. He has been engaged in the service of God since his college days and works as a Researcher in a Market Research Organization. Pradeep is married to Archana and they both have a son, Ayaansh Abel





Engaging our Subjects in conversations: Relationship builders

'Engaging our subjects' – it seems like a far-off idea. Juggling between classes, exams, assignments, social life, campus drama, extra-curriculars is challenging enough! We don't want to add onto the plateful of activities. Let me ease your burden - engaging is not an added activity on your plate. Rather it is a thread that binds all the existing activities together. 'To engage' is to engross, interest, enthrall, attract and appeal the University through the word of God displayed in various levels of our life.

University is a place where we bring our own perspectives to bear on those of others, while also opening and finetuning our own perspective. It's a place of open dialogue and open mind. The idea is to walk an extra mile understanding the standpoint of another person,

another faith, another perspective – without placing ourselves on a higher moral or intellectual ground. It cannot begin without a relationship. No one will feel open to dialogue unless they feel valued or heard or even understood.

The Latin Phrase "Coram Deo" means living ALL of life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God. It means that we remove the segregations of sacred and secular. That we acknowledge the work of God in our university or classroom, as much as in our fellowships. Not just in the spirit, but putting our minds to work for the Kingdom of God. Not only to form Bible groups, but representing God through our subjects, through our research, through our dialogue.

We can bring to the university theological and ethical dimensions, therefore we as Christians can

become valuable to the university. We are breeding the love and compassion of Christ.

We are affirming what the university should stand for – for the celebration of beauty, for justice, where curiosity is cultivated in each of us, creativity is celebrated in every experiment or activity, in every new piece of idea.

All of which – can be done in a classroom, in a gym, in a dorm room or a campus canteen, even virtually or in person. The only pre-requisite is to place people or a person above the subject matter. To create an environment and a platform, where even the shy or hesitant feel safe to share their opinion. Where every participant feels valued and heard. Building a relationship of mutual discovery about issues that excite them, and knowing how they perceive them.

We have all seen the opposite of this. Hot debates / arguments take a higher ground, where people are torn apart, and so are friendships. Sadly, many times such debates are initiated and led by Christ followers. Here the debate is won or lost at the cost of a person. We forget the very truth that our friend(s) are created in the image of God, as much as ourselves. The question

is, are we building the kingdom of God? where love and mercy are our companions. Or are we building a kingdom of human intellect where screaming, manipulating, attractive vocabulary or lofty ideas are placed above love for people.

Many people believe 'engaging' is only for intellectuals. But not so! Jesus was engaging the mind in a not so simple conversation about water, with the Samaritan woman. Some might recognize her intelligence, but she was not an intellectual or a research scholar by any University definition. But the conversation is certainly not one sided. She had some important questions to raise and Jesus addressed those. Jesus raises some questions too and it made her ponder. There was no superiority displayed.

Many times, by the use of loud voice, lofty words and modulation, we might have silenced a simple but truthful idea or a person. Like the Pharisees, we get caught up in the paraphernalia rather than the truth. So much so, that when Jesus – the long-awaited Messiah did appear, they refused to accept him. Simply because he was not anything they had expected him to be. Are we doing the same in our campuses? Are we placing the idea of truth as more important than the truth itself?

We need to break the idea of what 'engaging in the campus' needs to look like. We need to be trendsetters, where we redefine the exchange of ideas and the platform to do so. We need to strip ourselves of our pedestals and microphones (big words, loud voices, modulations etc.) and step down and share a meal or a glass of water with the Samaritan woman.

Our challenge is not only to win souls but to save minds. If Jesus is indeed the Lord of the University, then those who submit to His Lordship have a distinctive voice to bring to all these traditions of discourse. The way we read and interact with the Bible should be different. But the same applies to how we interact with a fellow human or how we interact with our subject / research. All of our work, whether in ministry or in classroom or in workplace is for the kingdom of God. Let us never treat it less than. Let us not place one higher than the other.

There is a systemic decline in the meaningful relationships in UESI across the nation. We are running with targets or agenda even in simple conversations. We find it impossible to have a natural conversation without it having an end-result. We find it extremely difficult to listen, to slow down, to

process the information. Engaging is a journey. We cannot drag people or forcefully feed our ideas. We need to build our relationship on common ground.

Our focus should be to have courage to bring our faith to bear upon our research, our teaching and commitments in the academia on a daily basis. The way we see our subjects as created by God, and working for God's world will change the way we approach it. And how we engage with our subject with our peers, our professors, our seniors and even inter-disciplinary groups is crucial to engaging the campus. At the same time, conversing will require a posture of humility, encouragement, patience, mutuality and respect. Which cannot be done without depending on God.

Here our attitude is tested – How we perceive our subject. Do we see our subject as the study of God's creation? Do we see it as passionately created by our Savior? Do we see it applied in his created world directly or indirectly? Or are we passing years in the University dragging our feet and waiting to get by? Is my approach in the way I discuss my subject opening eyes towards a loving creator? Is it raising questions about ethics and morality in the procedures?

Here our integrity is tested – not just in ways we honestly engage in our subject and work hard towards our goal. But also, how passionate we are to train and shape mindsets in the specific disciplines. How courageous we are to raise questions about unjust practices within the discipline? How eager are we to point out the systemic failures within the discipline? Are my conversations causing a re-reading of the Bible and a re-reading of the subject?

And finally, if we have healthy relationships with our peers, we might work together towards bringing justice in our discipline, breaking new grounds. It all starts with valuing not just our profession but people as individuals and unique. Putting relationships over subject matters. It may also lead us to discover new truths which we might have overlooked. It may lead us to collaborate with peers from various faiths and represent Christ on larger canvas.



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Transformational Impact on Campuses

It has been three months since I joined UESI Delhi as a coordinator and one of the things I have realised is the immeasurable potential every student who is a disciple of Christ, possesses to create a huge impact for Christ on their campuses. As a student throughout my UG and PG days I got the privilege to actively engage on my campus however not realising the magnitude of the impact the Lord has made through my life and involvement in my friends, professor's lives, classroom discussions, department and college-level events.

I still remember all the fascinating thought-provoking classroom discussions that I was able to be a part of during my UG and PG days where I got the golden opportunity to engage with my discipline through my faith. However, one of them I distinctively recollect is from one of my literary theory classes where we were doing postmodernism and my professor stated that 'there is no absolute truth but it is relative and subjective. I posed a question in my class asking that 'if there is no absolute truth, then what is that something concrete that one can hold on to?' The professor refuted my question



by saying that it was Friedrich Nietzsche who stated it and not her, to which two of my classmates from other faith joined in posing a similar question asking the professor's personal opinion on what then can be concrete that one can hold on to. But the professor never answered it suggesting that it was not a part of the curriculum however this later opened up a discussion on the subject of Truth with my classmates on a personal level where I could talk about my faith in Christ.

In one of my modern novel classes, an interesting topic of discussion that arose while doing a text titled 'A portrait of the artist as a young man' by James Joyce was the religious elements in the novel that created a lot of tension. My professor who was teaching that text was humble enough to admit that he didn't know much about the religious elements so considering me being the only Christian in my class my professor assigned me to do a class presentation on the

prominent differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to talk about some of the core beliefs, practices, and doctrine of salvation from both of them. This again led to a series of questions that led to meaningful discussions on the subject and moreover what my classmates and the professor appreciated was the hard work I put into my presentation in making my original notes for the class and the slideshow. Later this practice was followed by the subsequent presenters and I believe as Disciples of Christ we are called to excel in everything we do because our classmates notice the little details and through these efforts God is glorified.

On the account of women's day, my department organized a plethora of events for a week reminiscing the various women who made a mark in history throughout their lives. In one of the events, I went along with my friend to listen her read out her favourite excerpts from Toni Morrison's works, and later all the other students who too participated in that event, read and shared their favourite excerpts in their own words. While sharing their favourite excerpts many students broke down and cried out of hopelessness as they identified

their past trauma and daily struggles with the life experiences of the prominent women they were talking about. After listening to all of them, I just couldn't simply sit there as a spectator anymore having the hope through Christ. So I was compelled to ask the organizer for an opportunity to share something and God gave me the opportunity and courage to stand up and speak into that hopeless situation that things will change little by little but gradually. I assured all the students seated in that room that we as a small group of women from the English department are standing together and that no one is alone and things will change.

I want to share something that reinstated the significance of acknowledging the other person in our class. It is my habit to greet mostly everyone, especially my classmates with a 'hi' whom I meet on a daily basis. Little did I realize the impact it created on one of my classmates with whom I interacted however without knowing what she was personally going through. After we graduated from college, she sent me a long text message thanking me that I made her feel acknowledged by regularly saying 'hi'. She also said that I was carrying so much of joy and peace within that it was felt by her too. She said

that when she was going through an existential crisis and didn't know why she wanted to come to college or even live for that matter she felt so acknowledged by a simple 'hi' that made her come to college regularly, do the assignments and be around us. I replied to her message giving the source and reason behind my joy and peace pointing towards Christ and that He can do that for her too. She was glad to hear that.

During the conversations in my Arabic class, I got to listen to their faith and also share the good news of what Christ did for all of us. My friend and I were also able to do a paper presentation in the department literary fest on 'Caste as a disease shown in films like Article 15 and Periyar' under the larger theme of "Literary Diseases: Representation of Disease in Literature and Cinema". This helped me to address one of the dominant issues in the society and moreover this opened up more space for me to be a part of discussions among my peer groups about similar issues from patriarchy to Islamophobia. As I participated in many such department activities like sending in my poems for the magazine, open mics and simply being present in the book discussions brought me very close to the lives of the students to a point where once my classmate personally texted me to

ask my opinion on something very sensitive and I was able to give my opinion inspired from the word of God.

Sadly, from the time of my student life to the present, most of the students know the definition of campus engagement however lack the core understanding of the purpose and extent to which one can go. There is a tendency to go to two extremes; either refrain from engaging the campuses at all due to the skewed notion of segregating the sacred and secular or begin well but get too carried away by the society events and department activities forgetting the whole purpose of it.

As Colin Wright opines, "**Extremes are easy. Strive for balance**". This is one of my favorite quotes to live by as it emphasizes on the significance of balance in everything we do. As disciples of Christ, to help us keep the balance is undoubtedly the Word of God. Moreover to have a like-minded group of students who are willing to reach out to create an impact for Christ helps to avoid the danger of getting carried away. Every student can begin by interacting with their friends.

I would reinstate that college is not just to study, hang out with your own group of friends, attend EU and

Church but are called for so much more. Undoubtedly, all of this plays a vital role in every student's life but aren't you all called for something more than just you and your life? A call to begin from interacting with your friends to further leading to an impact on the campus. Students on the campuses are lost, hopeless, empty, broken, living in darkness, searching for the truth and meaning of life. So don't let fear tell you that they are not interested in the truth or anything for that matter.

Another point that I would like to make every clear is that your life speaks volumes of who Christ is; so 'live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Last week in one of the EU fellowships, the person who was sharing the Word said twice, "for some of your classmates your life will only be the Bible that they read". So live your lives mindfully knowing from where God brought you out into His glorious light so that you can testify his goodness in the campuses where God has placed you.



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Comic



Simeon Samuel Dinesh has done his BSc Visual communication at MCC, and was part of the EU since his second year, currently a freelance writer and illustrator.



A CREATIVE MINORITY – 'ENGAGING DEEPLY, YET DISTINCTIVELY'



“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:12 NIV

Four years of campus life changed me inside out – a journey that turned out to be more than an academic exercise. I was experiencing life raw for the first time since childhood. Strangers. Lovers. Emotions. Celebrations. Gospel. Evil. Death. Yes! All of that in one go gave a glimpse of life ahead.

The first year of college life took me to a premier national Institute of Technology in 2009. The believing students group was small back then with hardly 5-7 students. Despite being few in number, we eagerly prayed and worked toward reaching out to more students. As a principle, the engagement of students was restricted to academics and Scripture-related

activities. Other involvements were considered unproductive.

It was during those days that I heard the terrible news of a college senior's suicide. The memory of the coldness that gripped our hearts is still alive. I had briefly interacted with him and to grasp that he took his own life was difficult. Even though we used to pray and share the Gospel with the students of the campus, we did not do anything beyond that to address the issue of suicides and other student challenges. It was encouraging to see another Youth group put up a 'Pro-Life' kiosk within the campus during the cultural festival of NIT Calicut. The stall spoke about the sanctity of life and how abortion is

nothing less than murder. Still, we as believing students didn't engage in such issues or college activities fearing that they were a waste of time.

As the second year arrived, I was determined to leave my comfort zone to see how I could be involved in activities for the common good. God gave me opportunities to learn design and I, later on, started involving in the Campus Quiz Club as a designer. That platform further provided an opening to design brochures and posters for the cultural fest of NIT Calicut. By the third year, the friend circle grew as Lord used my skills in organizing major parts of the technical fest of the campus as well. The larger circle of influence among non-believers opened ways to talk about God, Kingdom values, and the Christian worldview. There would be times when 10-15 of my friends would attempt to corner me with questions of faith, religion, and my take on various issues. Through building relationships with more students, I was able to present myself as someone who was serious about Jesus Christ and saw all of life as God would. These initiatives were not wholeheartedly supported by the seniors back then due to their convictions on-campus engagement which was limited to sharing the gospel. But somewhere

deep inside, the Lord's promptings led me to engage more.

By the end of the third year, a few college seniors approached me to lead a task group to set up a support system for mentally and academically weak students on the campus. Initially, I hesitated to join the team as my EU seniors were not supportive. They were of the opinion that only the Gospel needs to be our focus and not counselling or encouragement. But, convinced that the opportunity, offered to befriend new students and help those in need, I took up the challenge prayerfully. After persistent efforts of advocacy and persuasion among deans and faculties lasting a year, the college set up its first student support system called the Student Guidance Cell (<https://www.sgc.nitc.ac.in/>). The Cell went on to bless many who were struggling academically and mentally. The system mainly consisted of a team of volunteers who identified struggling students, organized a series of tuition classes for those lagging in academics, and facilitated one-to-one counseling with trained counselors hired under the cell. It was encouraging to see that EU folks and other believers, years later, understood the potential of the platform to witness Christ and be instrumental in healing the lives of those in need.

Looking back at those years, I want to be honest in saying that it wasn't clear-cut doctrines or teachings that drove me to take up initiatives, but rather the nudges I felt daily from the Spirit of God. To be out in the world was never easy either as there were many places where I failed as an ambassador of God – words, thoughts, and actions. In a circle of non-believers, greater are the temptations and greater the discipline required to 'be in the world but not of the world'.

The role of the EU as a 'creative minority'* comes here as the call of the Christian community is to imitate Christ in a world broken and lost, irrespective of the risk it entails.

As in the words of a Jewish Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, "to become a creative minority is not easy because it involves maintaining strong links with the outside world while staying true to your faith, seeking not merely to keep the sacred flame burning but also to transform the larger society of which we are apart. This is a demanding and risk-laden choice."

Being part of a creative minority involves understanding our calling as Christians. Church as the renewed humanity, acting as 'salt and light', is showing the world

glimpses of what the New Earth will look like one day. Salt was used in those days as a preservative more than a tastemaker. Its function was to prevent decay in edible products. Once the salt is added, it is not visible to our eyes; but its presence is felt through its function. When God calls us to be salt, it means to be out there in the world preventing decay and overcoming evil with good. On our campuses, where the 'powers and principalities of this age are at play, God is calling us to prevent destructive ideas and act as agents of redemption in the lives of students. Suicides, alcoholism, ragging, physical abuse, campus violence, academic issues, insecurities, ideologies of atheism, and other consequence of evil demands a compassionate response from the child of God. It requires a wholehearted dive into campus life. Likewise, the call to be the 'light of the world' takes strength from above to talk about why we do what we do. Thus, we as believers can become a creative minority by promoting Kingdom values on campus – individually and collectively.

The journey of imitating Christ is not easy; it is costly and troublesome. Jesus warns us of mockery, temptations, and ridicule through His life. As believers, collective engagement and support

for each other can cater to these issues. Moving away from absolute discouragement of involving in campus initiatives to a more holistic engagement has to be pursued. Our believers' fellowship will act as the support system for fulfilling the call to be 'salt and light' on campuses.

In a self-centered world, 'I, me, myself Christianity' is gaining popularity where Christ becomes a mere ticket to eternal world. As the UESI family nurtures the next generation of leaders of Church and Society, we need to consciously address these trends. When imitating Christ is practiced right from campuses, students will be molded to witness to the world holistically. We will fulfil God's plan in creating a new breed of humanity, consisting of professionals, teachers, civil servants, pastors, and others, who will usher in God's Kingdom on earth. They can go on to be part of 'creative minorities' as churches and communities enabling the healing of the world. The Clapham sect led by William Wilberforce in the 19th Century is an apt example of such a collective, pivotal in the abolishment of the slave trade in England. Their strong convictions on religious

missions and social activism led to the founding of organizations such as the British and Foreign Bible Society, Church Missionary Society, and the Small Debt Society to name a few. The world desperately needs redemption through such covenantal communities who will witness in contexts of spiritual brokenness, material poverty, and prevailing injustice. Let me close with a quotation by Os Guinness - "What changes the world is not a fully developed Christian worldview, but a worldview actually lived; in other words, Christian lives that are the Word made flesh again." May the Lord of all creation, enable today's EUs to reflect Christ on the campuses through deep and distinct engagement in their campuses.

*- A Creative Minority is a Christian community in a web of stubbornly loyal relationships, knotted together in a living network of persons who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus together for the renewal of the world. [A Creative Minority: Influencing Culture Through Redemptive Participation by Jon Tyson and Heather Grizzle.]



Dipin V Panicker is a software engineer turned policy consultant working with Govt of Meghalaya in the area of skill development, livelihoods and entrepreneurship. He is married to Rijo Ann Varghese who is an IT professional. He is currently the Chairperson of EU2EGF Transition Task Group, NEGF Committee, UESI.

God's Love for His People

I have loved you
With an everlasting love;

I have drawn you
With loving-kindness;

I will restore you to health
And your wounds will be
healed;

I will build you up again
And you will be rebuilt.

Though you have gone
astray,
Still, you are my child;
Therefore, my heart yearns
for you
And I will redeem you.

I have loved you
With an everlasting love;
I have drawn you
With loving-kindness;



***S. Jenifer Lily Malar, II M.Sc.** Computer science was encouraged to write it in the pandemic situation experiencing the grace and mercy of God, based on the verses from Jeremiah. 31, She has recently joined as ministerial assistant at Greater Chennai*

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“Being Radical” is a challenging concept. A radical is one who practices fundamentalism and known for having extreme political or religious ideas or one who is different in his or her thinking and action from others. Being radical means being misunderstood and rejected by others. But it always has the positive connotation of bringing about drastic changes to the existing lifestyle and value system of individuals and society. Hence, to be radical means, to be willing to take risks and dare to be different!

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