THE CAMPUS MISSIONARY GUIDEBOOK

Students sharing Jesus at school and beyond.

Lee Rogers
and Youth Alive Missionaries

The Campus Missionary Guidebook

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GPH®
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Chapter 1

I Am a Campus Missionary.
I Share the Gospel.

Lee Rogers

"Well . . . I can't remember them all. But there's been Sam, Charlie, Neale, Angela, Leah, Edie, Dylan, Anthony, Chase, Dean . . . JD . . . " Aron paused for a moment and thought. He looked at Michelle as they worked together to remember as many names as possible. He continued after the pause. "Matt, Ethan, Sam, Keke, Danny, Keenan, Susanna, Alyssa, Linda, DeAnna, Bobby, Ethan . . . I know there's been a lot more, but I can't remember them at this moment."[1]

"Don't worry about it. This is amazing!" I replied. I had asked Aron and Michelle to remember as many students from their school as they could who had come to church and put their faith in God. This was the list they came up with in about two or three minutes. Aron and Michelle were campus missionaries—students who share Jesus at school and beyond. Every name they listed was a student from school they personally knew and had shared the gospel with. One by one, these friends made decisions to put their faith in God and started coming to church. Aron and

Michelle had seen a total of about thirty-five or forty friends come to their youth group regularly because they were sharing Jesus at school. It didn't happen all at once; in fact, they had been sharing the gospel all through high school, influencing a few students at a time, building a growing movement for the gospel.

They attended a public high school in the Portland, Oregon, area. They shared Jesus through personal conversations, a prayer group, Bible study huddles, and then a Youth Alive Club. They had seen God moving in their friends throughout their years in high school as they stayed true to their commitment to share Jesus as campus missionaries. That's why Michelle could continue with great faith, "But it's not really about how many come to our Youth Alive Club each week—it's about *who* comes. Who is supposed to be there to hear the gospel this week? Who do we need to invite to put their faith in God next week? Then how can we get them to church?"

It all started just three years earlier. Aron and Michelle's friend Deion was inspired by the Holy Spirit to start a movement of prayer on the high school football team. The three of them had made a commitment to be campus missionaries at the beginning of the school year and were trained by a U.S. missionary named Tom Bachman to share about Jesus with their friends and start a movement for the gospel at school. Deion and Aron were sophomores, and Michelle was a freshman. They were unable to have a Youth Alive Club in their school at that time, so David began to pray for God to give him a different idea on how they could work together to share the gospel at school.

Deion was a quarterback on the football team, and he felt God leading him to influence his team for the gospel. At the first game of the season, as the teams finished warming up before the kickoff, Deion walked out onto the field and took a knee to pray. Aron joined him. They finished praying and the game began. Deion and Arod agreed that they would keep praying before each game. The next week they went out to pray again, and this time another player on the team asked if he could join.

"Do you mind if I join you?" Deion's teammate asked. "I don't really believe in God, but I think it's really cool."

"Of course," a surprised Deion responded. "You're always welcome!" Deion, Arod, and their teammate knelt in prayer. They finished praying and the game began. The three of them agreed to pray again together before the next game.

When the next game came, several more players joined for prayer at the fifty-yard line. The week after that, even more players joined. By the middle of October, the entire football team was coming out to pray. God was moving, but it wasn't just about prayer—it was about salvation. It wasn't long after this that the entire offensive line came to church with Deion, heard a presentation of the gospel, and were invited to respond. As a unit, the linemen walked to the altar and put their faith in God. Through this movement of prayer, the head coach's son—who also played on the team—put his faith in Jesus. Then the head coach himself started going to church and put his faith in Jesus.

As their sophomore season concluded, Deion, Arod, and the players on the team who had come to faith in God decided they would keep the tradition of prayer going in the next football season. They also worked together throughout the rest of the school year, through their involvement in other sports and activities, to continue to share the gospel and invite their friends to put their faith in God.

When the next school year began, Deion, Arod, and Michelle decided that they would also start opening their Bibles together before school once a week. They started meeting together several minutes before the start of the school day in the cafeteria, where many other students also waited for the first bell. It wasn't an official school club; it was just a group of students huddling together to study God's Word. They began to invite other students to join them.

Soon other students started to join them. Several of those students began coming to church. It wasn't long before more of

their classmates decided to put their faith in God. Between the Bible study huddle and the prayer movement that continued on the football field, more and more students started putting their faith in God. It was an amazing turnaround in a school where there had been almost no Christian witness or influence. Two more friends, Rich and Carlos, became campus missionaries and started to help lead in the pregame prayers. By the time that school year ended, nearly twenty-five of their classmates had started coming to church, and many had placed their faith in God.

When the next school year began, Deion and Arod entered their senior year. Rich, Carlos, and Michelle were juniors. They all attended a youth conference together just before school started, and as they prayed together at the altar, Carlos felt the Holy Spirit urge the group to start a Youth Alive Club at their high school. There hadn't been a Christian club at this Portland-area high school in over twenty years, but armed with faith and the urging of the Holy Spirit, the group began to plan. After they met with school administration and demonstrated that there were now over thirty Christians in the school who wanted to join the club, the school administration agreed to allow the club to form.

Each week the club would meet and share the gospel with other students they invited to join the club. The campus missionaries were constantly inviting their classmates to join them. It wasn't easy; in fact, they were targeted because of Itheir faith in God and their traditional biblical beliefs. The bullying they endured was severe, both in person at school and through social media. However, they were strongly committed to sharing the gospel and relied on the Holy Spirit to get them through the challenges. That year, they saw their youth group grow by thirty-five to forty students who consistently came to church as a result of what God was doing in the school.

I asked Deion and his friends what drove them to go to such lengths to see Jesus proclaimed in their school. Deion answered, "I am a campus missionary. I share the gospel."

A Student Who Shares Jesus

A campus missionary is a student who commits to share Jesus—at school and beyond. Often, when people hear the word *missionary*, they think of someone who goes to share the gospel in far-off places where the gospel needs to be heard. Today, there is probably no place where the gospel needs to be heard more in our nation—where people are far off from God—than middle schools and high schools. The middle schools and high schools of the United States are the largest and most accessible mission fields in our nation, and quite possibly in the world. However, this mission field is only accessible to one type of missionary: a middle or high school student who carries the gospel and shares Jesus on their campus—a campus missionary.

The word *missionary* originated from the Latin word *mittere* which means "to send." In the Greek text of John 20:21, John used two similar words to explain the idea of sending—*apostellō* and *pempō*. Jesus said to His disciples, " 'Peace be with you. As the Father has *sent* me, so I am *sending* you.' " Then he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' " (John 20:21–22, emphasis added). This event took place after Jesus' resurrection from the dead and before He ascended back to heaven. So, all the disciples of Jesus, except for Judas, were sent—they were Jesus' missionaries. In other words, a missionary is a disciple who is sent by God to proclaim the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today, all of us who are disciples of Jesus, even teenagers, should also be missionaries to our friends and others around us. We are all a part of God's mission to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). The disciples received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The purpose of receiving the Holy Spirit is to have power to be witnesses for God (Acts 1:8). This is further proof that we are all sent by God to proclaim the gospel—that we are all missionaries—because God has made the Holy Spirit's power to be a witness available to every disciple. In Joel 2:28–29, God promised, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men

will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike." God wants to pour His Spirit out on *all* of us—He wants us *all* to be His witnesses through the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants to send us *all* as missionaries into our school campuses and communities.

A campus missionary commits to share about Jesus—to share the gospel at school and beyond. It doesn't matter if you attend a public school or a private school—you can be a campus missionary. It doesn't matter if your campus is online; God will use you to share the gospel online if you commit to be a campus missionary. It doesn't even matter if you are homeschooled. If you are homeschooled, your entire neighborhood or community is your campus. There are teenagers in your community who need to hear the gospel, and you can be the missionary God sends to bring a message of faith to them.

Campus missionaries embrace the power of the Holy Spirit to share the gospel. Campus missionaries pray for their friends to experience God's saving grace and His healing and miraculous power. Campus missionaries serve those around them and work to meet needs and bring healing to their school communities. Campus missionaries work to grow the church by inviting their friends and classmates to church and youth group. Most importantly, campus missionaries share the good news of Jesus with words because "faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ" (Romans 10:17). Deion, Arod, Michelle, Rich, and Carlos were campus missionaries who made an incredible difference for the gospel in their school. They answered God's call; they were sent as missionaries to their school. Will you also answer God's call? Will you be a campus missionary?

Big Wins and Small Wins

What does it look like to be a successful campus missionary? There are two big wins every campus missionary should strive for. A campus missionary is a student, like you, who commits

to share about Jesus. Sharing the gospel with friends and classmates and inviting them to put their faith in God is the first big win of a campus missionary. Our job in God's mission is to share the gospel with others. It's up to them to respond to the gospel, and it's up to God to save them. We win as campus missionaries when we faithfully do our part—sharing about Jesus with our words and inviting others to put their faith in God.

The second big win of a campus missionary is connecting our friends and classmates to our local church or youth group. This is important because the church is a community of faith that can help to provide discipleship for those friends who decide to put their faith in God. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20), Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to obey His commands. As sent ones—as missionaries—it's not enough for us only to share the gospel; we must connect those who respond to the church for discipleship.

There are also small wins that campus missionaries can experience on a regular basis. A Five Friend Focus is a good and easy win to start with. A Five Friend Focus is a prayer list of five friends or classmates that you want to share the gospel with. You can record your prayer list of five friends in a note on your phone or using the planning board at the end of this chapter. You create a small win when you pray faithfully for those friends. Pray for their salvation, pray for opportunities to serve them, pray that they accept your invitation to church, and pray for the Holy Spirit to give you boldness to share the gospel.

Serving your friends by helping them or meeting one of their needs is a small win. Praying with them is a small win. Sharing a Bible verse with them is a small win. Having any kind of conversation when God or the church is talked about is a small win. Wearing a shirt that helps you start a conversation about the gospel is a small win. Carrying your Bible around school and using it is a small win. Handing out gospel-sharing material like *Alive in 5* is a small win. Writing or talking about faith or Jesus in school assignments is a small win.

The campus missionaries in the Portland, Oregon, area experienced several small wins as they worked to accomplish big wins: They wore shirts that proclaimed the message of the gospel and their faith in God, they started a prayer movement, they began a Bible huddle at school, and then they started a Youth Alive Club. These are all small wins that help a campus missionary make progress toward the big wins of sharing the gospel and connecting others to the church.

What Are We Going to Do About This?

According to research, approximately 61 percent of U.S. teenagers never read the Bible, and 74 percent don't attend church regularly.[2] That means well over half of middle and high school students in our nation aren't disciples and likely haven't put their faith in God. As followers of Jesus, what are we going to do about this? Today in our nation there are over thirty-three million students in over sixty-nine thousand middle and high schools. Only 23 percent of those schools are known to have a campus missionary or a gospel-sharing club present.[3] That leaves over fifty-three thousand schools with no known gospel-sharing presence. As Spirit-empowered witnesses, what are we going to do about this? Approximately 42 percent of today's teenagers have a diagnosed mental health condition.[4] Of those diagnosed, nine out of ten have anxiety and eight out of ten have depression. As a people whom God is sending, what are we going to do about this?

The apostle Paul wrote, "So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!' " (2 Corinthians 5:20). There are many teenagers in your school and community who need to hear the gospel. As Christ's ambassadors, I ask you, what are we going to do about this? It is time to take action. Are you ready to commit to be a campus missionary? Are you ready to commit to share Jesus at school and beyond? The answer to all of these challenges is found in the gospel, and God wants to send you to your campus as a messenger—a campus missionary—who will deliver that gospel message.

If you are ready to move forward, use the following planning board to start to think through your campus missionary plan.

Campus Missionary Planning Board

My School:

My Grade:

I have _____ years left to share the gospel in my school.

My Prayer List – Five Friend Focus
I am praying for the following five friends to put their faith in God:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

I am believing God for the following big wins for the gospel:

I will work to share the gospel by achieving the following small wins:

Notes

[1] Names were changed to protect each student's identity.
[2] "Global Youth Culture Report," OneHope, www.globalyouthculture.net, 2022.
[3] *Every Student, Every School Database*, www.everyschool.com, 2025.
[4] "Survey: 42% of Gen Z Diagnosed with a Mental Health Condition," www.psychiatrist.com, November 9, 2022.

Chapter 2

Overcoming Obstacles

Lee Rogers

The campus missionaries in Portland, Oregon, made a tremendous impact for the gospel in their school, but it didn't come without challenges. In fact, many obstacles were put in their way that could have prevented them from sharing the gospel. To start with, the school they attended had not permitted a Christian club to form in over twenty years. Before Deion and Arod started the prayer movement, they attempted to start a club but were denied permission by school officials. They knew this was probably a violation of their rights, but they weren't sure how to challenge the school's decision. So instead of focusing on the obstacle, they found a way to work around it by starting a movement of prayer on their football team.

As the prayer movement began to grow, one of the assistant coaches of their football team became irritated about what was happening. The coach went to the referees and asked them to shut down the prayer time. Fortunately, the referees realized

that because the prayer was happening outside of official game time, they were powerless to stop the students from praying. At the same time, Deion and Arod faced a great amount of intimidation by one of their own coaches simply for praying. Instead of focusing on the obstacle, they just kept praying and God kept moving.

The reason the campus missionaries started a Bible study huddle during the next school year is because they were still denied permission to have a Christian club. They felt called to start a movement for the gospel inside the school building, not just on the football field. So, instead of focusing on the obstacle, they focused on working around it by huddling together with their Bibles unofficially before school hours. As they stayed focused on the mission, God continued to move.

The next year, they went to the school principal and took legal information with them that explained their rights to have a Christian club at school. As they had a conversation with the principal and confronted her with the law, the principal realized she had to allow the Christian students to meet and form a club. However, obstacles continued to be put in front of the campus missionaries. At their second club meeting, students and teachers were protesting the club with signs in the hallway outside their meeting room. A cruel cyberbullying campaign took place; the campus missionaries were told that they were stupid and ugly, and that they should kill themselves.

School officials did very little to stop the bullying that was happening. However, while many students might have decided to quit because of the challenges and obstacles, these campus missionaries kept their eyes on the mission—sharing about Jesus—and God honored their commitment. During that school year, their group grew to between thirty-five and forty students, and many of their friends put their faith in God. When their Youth Alive Club started the next school year, they had nearly sixty students sign up—almost twice as many as the first year. God continued to move.

Eyes on the Mission, Not on the Obstacle

Deion, Arod, Michelle, Rich, and Carlos chose to keep their eyes on the mission, not the obstacles that were put in front of them. As a quarterback on the football team, Deion knew what it was like to face obstacles. The defense is always trying to stop the quarterback and the rest of the offense from reaching the goal line. If the defense put up obstacles that stopped them from moving the ball on one play, Deion knew they had to try something different on the next play. The important thing was to keep their eyes on the mission—reaching the goal line. In the same way, when these campus missionaries faced obstacles that could have stopped their progress in sharing the gospel, they simply ran a different play to find a work-around that would enable them to move forward with sharing Jesus.

When you decide to take action as a campus missionary to share Jesus at school and with your friends, it's inevitable that you will face obstacles. It's likely that at some point you will have your rights denied, you will be made fun of, or you will feel like no one is listening. Remember to keep your eyes on the mission; keep changing your methods until you find something that works. If you focus on the obstacle, you could end up spending a lot of time and energy fighting instead of spending your time and energy sharing about Jesus.

I have known some campus missionaries who spent an entire school year arguing with a principal or a school board over their rights to have a Christian club at school. While you do have a right to have a club, it's not necessary to have a club to achieve the mission of sharing the gospel. Being denied the right to have a club is an obstacle, but it's also a distraction. If you focus on the obstacle, you may end up spending the entire school year distracted from the mission of sharing about Jesus. Keep your eyes on the mission. If you are faced with obstacles, try a different method to talk about Jesus, but by all means keep moving forward in the mission.

The Apostle Paul and Citizens' Rights

The apostle Paul knew well what it was like to face obstacles while going all out for the mission to spread the gospel. Paul traveled around the Roman Empire and started many churches. It's believed that he wrote about half of the books in the New Testament, including many of the epistles. These were letters that Paul wrote to the churches and church leaders he was connected to. In his second letter to the church at Corinth, Paul gave a list of some of the obstacles he faced while working to share the message of Jesus. (See 2 Corinthians 11:23–27.)

The list of obstacles Paul faced for sharing the gospel is astounding:

- imprisoned multiple times
- whipped more times than he could count (specifically, whipped with thirty-nine lashes on five different occasions, which means he was beaten by Jewish authorities)
- faced death multiple times
- beaten with rods three times (which means he was beaten by Roman authorities)
- stoned (punished by having stones thrown at him, at least one time to the point the people thought he was dead—Acts 14:19)
- shipwrecked
- spent a day and night adrift at sea
- faced danger from rivers and robbers
- faced sleepless nights
- went without food

When considering all of these obstacles, it would be normal to question why Paul didn't just give up. If Paul went through these challenges today, it's possible some in the church would tell him

he was outside of God's will and he should stop what he was doing. However, this was not Paul's mindset. His mind was set on the mission, not on the obstacles.

Interestingly, if Paul wanted to focus on the obstacles, he had the right to and he probably wouldn't have suffered nearly as much. Paul was a Jewish teacher—a rabbi. He was Jewish by birth, but also by custom and culture. Until Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), he was also Jewish in his religious belief and persecuted Christians. Through the events of Acts 9, Paul came to realize Jesus was the Messiah that the Jews had long prayed for. Paul began preaching to the Jews in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. Throughout the rest of his life and travels, Paul would go to the synagogues and proclaim that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. This was deeply offensive to many Jews, which is why Paul faced numerous punishments at the hands of the Jewish authorities.

However, Paul wasn't only Jewish; he was also a Roman citizen by birth. At this time, the Romans were ruling over the Jews, and having Roman citizenship was highly valued.[5] As a Roman citizen, Paul had specific rights that should have protected him from much suffering and many obstacles. Roman citizens weren't allowed to be punished with violence or put to death without a trial, and those government authorities who did punish a citizen without a trial were to be held responsible.[6] That means the suffering Paul endured at the hands of the government authorities, both Jewish and Roman, was a violation of Paul's rights. If he had chosen to focus on the obstacles—to demand that his rights be respected—he probably could have avoided a lot of pain and suffering.

What makes Paul's refusal to demand his rights as a Roman citizen (most of the time) even more fascinating is that he actually *did* assert his rights as a citizen three times in the Book of Acts. That means, according to his list of sufferings, at least eight times (five whippings by Jewish authorities and three beatings by Roman authorities) he did not stand up for his rights, but three times he did. Why would Paul ask for his rights

sometimes, but keep his citizenship a secret most of the time? The answer to this question is found in the Scripture passages where Paul asserted his citizenship and his rights.

Acts 16:16–40 tells a story of Paul and Silas, who were severely beaten and imprisoned by the Romans for causing a public disturbance while spreading the gospel in Philippi. The Roman authorities didn't know about Paul's status as a citizen when they beat him and threw him in jail. That night, as Paul and Silas were worshipping God around midnight, a strong earthquake shook the prison. The doors of the prison flew open, and all the prisoners' chains fell off. As a result of this demonstration of God's power, Paul was able to lead the jailer and his entire family to Jesus, and they were baptized in water that same night. It was only the next morning that Paul revealed his citizenship to the government authorities.

We can't know for sure why Paul waited until after he had suffered to assert his rights, but we can be certain that Paul wouldn't have been thrown in jail if he had. That means the jailer and his entire family wouldn't have put their faith in God that night, because he and Paul wouldn't have met. As a result of Paul waiting to reveal his rights until after they had been violated, an entire family was saved and also baptized in water. If Paul had focused on the obstacle and claimed his rights, the gospel wouldn't have been spread to a new family that night. It was better for Paul's mission to share about Jesus that he waited until after he had suffered to assert his rights.

The next two times Paul asserted his citizenship and rights are found in Acts 22:25–29 and 25:7–12. Both times are connected to the same incident that took place in Jerusalem, where Paul's mission to spread the gospel again caused a disturbance. The Roman authorities had tied Paul down to whip him when Paul asked, "Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been tried?" (Acts 22:25). To this point, Paul had only asserted his Jewish citizenship and status (Acts 21:39) so he could preach to a Jewish crowd. Because of this, the Romans didn't know that he was also a Roman citizen. As soon as Paul

asked the question and asserted his rights, the attempt to punish him was stopped until he could have a trial.

The next day the investigation and trial began. As part of the trial that day, Paul again had the opportunity to talk about his faith in God with the Jews. That night Jesus appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well" (Acts 23:11). Paul then had a clear direction; he was a witness for Jesus during this trial in Jerusalem, and God was sending him to Rome to be a witness there. Paul's trial was moved from the local Roman authorities in Jerusalem to the Roman governor's authority. For two years Paul was held by the governor, and Paul had regular conversations with the governor and his wife about faith in Jesus. After two years, the governor changed, and Paul's trial sped up. The Jews requested that Paul be handed over to them to stand trial in a Jewish court so they could put him to death.

Paul realized that this provided him with the opportunity to fulfill God's mission for him to go to Rome. For the third recorded time, Paul asserted his rights and requested a trial before Caesar in Rome. The governor recognized Paul's rights and decided he should go. Before he was sent to Rome, Paul was given the opportunity to defend his case before the Jewish king, Agrippa. He took this chance in front of a high-ranking authority to once again share the gospel and talk about Jesus. At every recorded chance he had to speak publicly during his trials, Paul took the opportunity to talk about faith in God.

When Paul asserted his Roman rights, it was for the purpose of furthering his mission to share the gospel. When he didn't assert his rights and chose to suffer instead, it was for the purpose of furthering his mission to share the gospel. Paul was focused primarily on the mission to share about Jesus, not the obstacles in his path. When he didn't use his rights, it was for the gospel. When he did use his rights, it was for the gospel. Paul didn't use his rights for his own protection or benefit; he used them to advance the gospel and tell more people about Jesus.

Our Rights Are for the Gospel

Just like Paul had rights as a citizen of Rome, many of us have rights as citizens of the United States. Just like Paul, we need to realize that our rights are given to us by God for the purpose of advancing the gospel. As campus missionaries, we must stay focused on the mission to tell others about Jesus. If your rights are challenged as you try to share about Jesus, you will have the opportunity to make the same decision the apostle Paul did. You'll need to consider what is best for the mission God has given you to share the gospel. Is the mission better served by focusing on the obstacle and fighting to have your rights respected? Or is the mission better served by not asserting your rights and suffering through the violation of your rights? From what we know in Scripture, Paul chose suffering without his rights more than twice as many times as he chose to use the protection of his rights. In suffering, Paul found that he became more like Jesus, who came to suffer and die for all of us (Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24).

Over the Wall, Through a Window, in a Basket

There is also a third path to take when it comes to sharing about Jesus at school and beyond. You don't always have to choose between fighting for your rights or suffering without them—you can take the third path. Paul was known to do this and wrote about one way he took a third option in his list of obstacles. In 2 Corinthians 11:32–33, Paul wrote, "When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me. I had to be lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall to escape." Paul had been given a mission from God to tell others about Jesus, but he was stuck in hiding behind the Damascus city walls. He could have asserted his Romans rights and entered a long legal process and trial, or he could have kept his citizenship a secret and suffered at the hands of the Jewish authorities.

Instead of either of these options, Paul found a third path. He kept his eyes on the mission, not the obstacles. God had said that Paul was His "chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Since this was Paul's mission, he needed to get out of Damascus. Staying there and being imprisoned or sitting through a lengthy trial weren't good options, so Paul found a third way. He got over the wall by going through a window in a basket.

Many times when you face obstacles to sharing about Jesus at school, you can find a way to work around the obstacle if you stay focused on the mission. Rather than suffer without your rights by doing nothing or having a long legal battle to see your rights respected, you can try a third way. For example, if you are faced with an obstacle that prevents you from starting a Youth Alive Club, start an unofficial huddle or prayer movement instead. If you are told you can't hand out Bibles at school, give them to your friends outside of school. If you are told you can't use school email to invite people to your Christian club, use social media instead. Even if God speaks to you about advocating for your rights, as God sometimes spoke to Paul, stay focused on the mission and find a way around the obstacle while your rights are being considered. Like Paul, when you are faced with an obstacle at the city gates, you can choose a third path—get over the wall by going through a window in a basket.

How to Use This Book

A campus missionary is a student who commits to share about Jesus. This campus missionary guidebook is designed to help you discover and put into practice different ways of sharing the gospel at school and beyond. There are many ways to share the gospel with your friends and classmates, and each of the remaining chapter in this book highlights and explains a different method for telling about Jesus. Each method has been tested and shown effective and has also been proven to be a legal right of students under the Constitution and other laws of our nation. In other words, not only are these methods effective

in sharing the gospel, but you are also permitted by law to use these methods in a public school setting.

Each chapter is illustrated by a true story of a campus missionary who actually shared the gospel using that particular method. You will also find Scripture that connects the method of sharing Jesus to biblical truth. You will be challenged to personally share the gospel as a campus missionary using that method and given practical ideas of how to use that method at school right now. Additionally, the second half of each chapter explains the law and court rulings that have established and protected your right to use that method of sharing the gospel in a public school setting. Finally, in each chapter you'll find a planning board to help you come up with a plan or strategy for using that method in your school.

If you encounter any obstacles, such as a teacher or school official telling you that you can't share the gospel at school, you can use the legal information provided in each chapter to have a conversation with your principal about your rights and how they can be restored. If a conversation doesn't work to restore your rights to share the gospel, you may want to consider working around the challenge by sharing Jesus through one of the other methods explained in this book. Remember, it's important to keep your eyes on the mission, not the obstacle.

However, if you feel you should continue to advocate for your rights to be restored, we recommend following the general process outlined in the Appendix of this book. It's important to always keep your conversations respectful and kind, even when they don't go as well as you would like.

Notes

[5] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Accordance electronic ed. (InterVarsity Press, 1993), 370.

[6] Clinton E. Arnold, "Acts," in *John, Acts* vol. 2 of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament*. ed. Clinton E. Arnold; Accordance electronic ed. (Zondervan, 2002), 378.

Chapter 3

Sharing the Gospel Through Conversation

Jessica Riner

"Pastor Jessica! I led a guy to the Lord at school this week!" Rogelio could hardly contain his excitement as he spoke to me over the phone. To be honest, I was pretty excited, too! Rogelio is a high school student in Georgia, and he is a campus missionary to his school and his friends. Just one week before I received this phone call, I had trained Rogelio and some of his friends at church on how to have conversations that lead to Jesus using the *Alive in 5* booklet. Rogelio put his training to work that very week, and when his friend said yes to Jesus, Rogelio couldn't help but call to tell me about it.

Rogelio went on: "I used the *Alive in 5* booklet and began to share the information in it. Then I asked my friend the questions. These questions are thought-provoking and really work!" Then he began to tell me the whole story.

A classmate was sitting in the cafeteria alone, and Rogelio sat with him and began talking with him. He said the conversation was hard at first because the guy had grown up attending church and knew the Bible, yet he didn't believe. Rogelio left the lunch table that day praying for God to give him the answers he needed for his friend. The next night at church, he prayed again for his friend and also for other students he wanted to talk to about Jesus. The next day when Rogelio was in the library reading his Bible, his friend came by to talk to him again about his faith. His friend had a lot of questions, and with God's help, Rogelio was able to answer all of them. Later that day, his friend asked if Rogelio would pray for him and said that he wanted to give his life to Christ. That day Rogelio led this first friend to the Lord. A week later at See You at the Pole, his friend publicly announced his decision to follow Jesus; so did twenty other students. Since that day, Rogelio and other campus missionaries in his school have impacted the lives of more than one hundred students through personal conversations, outreaches, and youth ministry activities. They have prayed with other students to give their lives to Jesus.

One of the things that has been so successful for Rogelio and his friends in connecting with other classmates is sitting with them in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch. They bring their Bibles with them, sit down with a group of students, and begin to initiate conversations with them about Jesus. Many salvations have taken place because students sat down with other students and engaged with them in a one-on-one conversation about their faith.

You may be wondering, "How could so many students be inspired to put their faith in Jesus in just nine months?" The answer is basic: After attending a training with Youth Alive on how to share his faith using the *Alive in 5* gospel model, Rogelio began to have conversations with other students. The week after the training, he took steps to launch a larger movement for the gospel—a Youth Alive Club—in his school. He rallied his friends together, started sharing Scriptures, prayed with them, and challenged his friends to help him tell

more people about Jesus in their school. This movement of students sharing about Jesus through conversations got off to a great start because just one student had a passion to see his school reached with the gospel.

Initiating a conversation with a person is the best way to share the gospel with them. I heard a statistic recently where someone said that nearly 75 percent of people today who say they are followers of Jesus came to faith through a friend witnessing to them. Stop and think for a moment: When was the last time you had a conversation with a friend about God? Sadly, for most Jesus-followers, it's not very often. Most people are reluctant to engage someone in conversation about Jesus. Maybe it's the fear of rejection or feeling like we don't know enough that keeps us silent about our faith. It could also be that we are hesitant to share about our faith because we have assumed that people around us just don't want to hear about Jesus. But, is there anything more important than sharing the hope of Jesus with a friend?

Faith Through Conversations

The Bible reminds us that faith comes from hearing the good news about Jesus. Romans 10:14–17 says,

> But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"
>
> But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "LORD, who has believed our message?" So, faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

The apostle Paul stated it so simply, yet powerfully—people must hear about Jesus before they can believe in Him. *Our friends* must hear about Jesus if they are going to believe in Him.

People probably won't believe in Jesus if someone doesn't go and tell them, if someone doesn't start a conversation with them. Romans 10:15 tells us that people who share the gospel with others have beautiful feet. Do you have beautiful feet? Are you allowing God to use you to share His good news with the classmates around you? An incredible miracle takes place in the heart of a person when they give their life to the Lord.

The Book of John also illustrates one of my favorite stories to highlight in the Bible. The first chapter of John demonstrates the power of sharing the gospel through personal conversations. It highlights the conversations between John the Baptist, Andrew, and Simon Peter. Read John 1:29–42 and notice how John reached Andrew with the gospel, then Andrew reached Peter. John made it a priority to spread the good news about Jesus to the people he met. John's conversations led others to put their faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. John's influence on Andrew's life is noticeable here because Andrew immediately went to tell his brother about Jesus the Messiah. This chain of events from John 1 demonstrates how we can impact other people's lives through gospel conversations.

Get the Conversation Going

As Rogelio began to share the information in the *Alive in 5* booklet and ask his friend the questions, he realized it was easier than he thought it would be to engage a friend in a conversation about Jesus. Some moments were a little challenging as his classmate asked difficult questions. Through moments of prayer, God helped Rogelio to continue his conversation, answer the difficult questions, and lead his friend to Jesus. Take a few minutes to think about who you can talk with today in your school or community about the message of Jesus. If we are willing, God will use us to tell Jesus' story one

by one to the people around us who are lost and hurting. Let's do everything we can to reach more people. Let's get talking. People are waiting to be engaged in conversations.

It's important not to be afraid to tackle the difficult questions one by one. If you don't know an answer, tell your friend you'll think about it, research the answer, and get back with him or her in a day or two to continue the conversation. I challenge you and any other campus missionaries in your school to jump all in and begin having conversations with your friends that lead them to Jesus. Don't keep delaying the initiation of powerful conversations. If you have never shared your faith with a friend, then let today be Day One.

Cafeteria, Breakfast Table, Lunch Table, Youth Alive Club, Everywhere

Determine right now that you are going to be a campus missionary and that you will have conversations with your classmates about the good news of Jesus. To help you get started, here are a few easy ways you can share the gospel through conversation with your classmates.

- Choose to sit with different people in the cafeteria each week at school. Initiate an intentional conversation about the gospel with a different person or small group of people during breakfast and lunch.

- Ask friends to walk through the *Alive in 5* gospel booklet with you. This is a really easy way to begin a gospel conversation. The questions in the booklet are thought-provoking. It's an easy way to invite a friend to talk with you about Jesus. You can receive a copy of this booklet from the Youth Alive missionary closest to you, or you can purchase one through www.MyHealthyChurch.com.

- Engage a friend in conversation and ask about their views of faith. Seek to learn more about what they believe. Be ready to share your personal testimony

with them as the conversation moves in that direction. Share with your friend or classmate what your life was like before knowing Jesus personally and tell them how your life has changed for the better. The goal in every conversation is to point your friend to the goodness of God in your life and their life.

- Pray and ask God to bring people into your path that you can engage in conversation with every week.

- Look for opportunities to have conversations about your faith with friends that play sports with you or participate in other school activities with you.

Freedom of Speech for the Gospel

Not only is a conversation the best way to share the gospel with someone, talking about your faith in public is the right of every U.S. citizen, including students. The United States Constitution establishes this right, and several U.S. Supreme Court rulings have upheld it over time. Since we have the right to free speech, let's use that right fully to talk about the gospel! While we absolutely have these rights, sometimes school officials are unaware of the content of the law and court rulings and can mistakenly forbid a student from talking about Jesus. Additionally, at times schools are overly cautious in trying to avoid controversy around religion or are afraid they will be viewed as favoring one religion over another, so they mistakenly forbid Christians from talking about their faith freely.

If you encounter challenges while talking about your faith or having a conversation about the gospel, follow these three simple steps as a starting point.

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things!*" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to talk about your faith.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

The language of the United States Constitution makes freedom of speech clear in the First Amendment, which reads:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

In other words, it's against the Constitution for Congress to make a law against the free practice of your religion or faith, or your right to freedom of speech. Our Christian faith requires us to talk about the gospel with those who haven't yet put their faith in God,[7] so when it comes to having conversations about Jesus, both our freedom of speech and our free exercise of religion come into play.

In addition to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment also guarantees freedom to practice your faith and freedom of speech. It reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

This amendment makes it clear that states also cannot make laws that violate our rights as citizens under the Constitution, and this includes public school systems. The U.S. Congress can't take away your rights, and local governments can't either.

The Supreme Court

As clear as this seems in the Constitution, there have been many times when public schools have mistakenly taken away students' rights to free speech. The Supreme Court has weighed in and defined student freedom of speech, including when it comes to faith, several times in its history. One of the most important cases that helped establish student free speech is *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969). This case involved students in Iowa who wanted to protest the Vietnam War, and the school district suspended them when they exercised their right to free speech. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the students, and Justice Abe Fortas made several important statements in the ruling:

> "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 506.

> "Under our Constitution, free speech is not a right that is given only to be so circumscribed that it exists in principle, but not in fact." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 513.

> "School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students. Students in school, as well as out of school, are 'persons' under our Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights which the State must respect, just as they themselves must respect their obligations to the State... They [students] may not be confined to the expression of those sentiments that are officially approved." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 511.

In this ruling, the Court also made clear that freedom of speech for students includes both discussions during class and casual conversations outside of classroom time:

> "A student's rights, therefore, do not embrace merely the classroom hours. When he is in the cafeteria, or on the playing field, or on the campus during the authorized hours, he may express his opinions, even on controversial subjects." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 512–13.

The Court even went as far as to say that it doesn't matter if the content of student speech is controversial or unpopular. Justice Fortas made it a point to say that we are better off as a nation because of this freedom:

> "Any word spoken, in class, in the lunchroom, or on the campus, that deviates from the views of another person may start an argument or cause a disturbance. But our Constitution says we must take this risk . . . ; and our history says that it is this sort of hazardous freedom—this kind of openness—that is the basis of our national strength and of the independence and vigor of Americans who grow up and live in this relatively permissive, often disputatious, society." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 508–09.

The Court also imposed some limits on when and how student freedom of speech can be used. They stated that our speech cannot collide with the "rights of others," or "materially and substantially interfere" with the operation of the school. *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 513. So keep in mind that while we have freedom to talk about the gospel, we don't have freedom to disrupt class,

and we can't block or interfere with anyone else's rights as found in the U.S. Constitution.

A second important case for student free speech, especially when it comes to sharing the gospel, is *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia*, 515 U.S. 819 (1995). In this case, the Supreme Court found that a public school (University of Virginia) discriminated against a Christian student newspaper group because of their religious beliefs. Justice Anthony Kennedy made several important statements about freedom of speech when it comes to faith:

> " . . . the government may not regulate speech based on its substantive content or the message it conveys." *Rosenberger*, 515 U.S. at 828.
>
> "In the realm of private speech or expression, government regulation may not favor one speaker over another . . . Discrimination against speech because of its message is presumed to be unconstitutional." *Rosenberger*, 515 U.S. at 828.
>
> "The government must abstain from regulating speech when the specific motivating ideology or the opinion or perspective of the speaker is the rationale for the restriction." *Rosenberger*, 515 U.S. at 829.

In other words, if a public school is denying freedom of speech to someone simply because they are a Christian, or because the content of their speech is about the gospel, that is forbidden by the Constitution and the Supreme Court.

The First Amendment of the Constitution also states that the government cannot create laws that establish a religion; this is often referred to as "the establishment clause." At times, schools have denied student free speech when it comes to faith because they are afraid that if they allow students to talk openly about religion, they are going against the establishment clause. However, in the case of *Widmar v. Vincent*, 454 U.S. 263 (1981), the Supreme Court stated that the establishment clause

is limited by the individual rights of free exercise of religion and freedom of speech. Justice Lewis Powell wrote:

> "[T]he state interest asserted here—in achieving greater separation of church and State than is already ensured under the Establishment Clause of the Federal Constitution—is limited by the Free Exercise Clause, and, in this case, by the Free Speech Clause as well." *Widmar*, 454 U.S. at 276.

In other words, a public school cannot deny any student's right to talk freely about their faith simply because the school fears it would violate the establishment clause.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

Note

[7] Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13–17; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Colossians 4:5–6; James 5:20; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 23.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to have conversations with your friends about the gospel. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to start a conversation about Jesus.

Conversation Planning Board

Lunch Tables – I can start conversations about the gospel with the following lunch tables (Write down different people/tables at lunch and a day of the week you will sit with that particular table.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Alive in 5 – I will share the gospel with the following friends and classmates by asking them to walk through *Alive in 5* with me:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

I will share my story as part of my conversations. (Write down the outline of your testimony, or some of the big ways God has worked in your life that you want to share in your conversations.)

My favorite Scripture verses that I want to share in a conversation are:

Chapter 4

Sharing the Gospel Through a Movement

Megan Kronstedt and Yoyo Garcia

It was a cloudy Thursday afternoon in November when I (Megan) walked onto a middle school campus to join Angelina for her school's Youth Alive Club. I opened the double doors leading to the front office, got signed in, and met an eager Angelina. She ushered me through the halls toward Mrs. Frost's room where the club met, and I couldn't help but smile while she shared her plans for the club meeting. We passed bright posters on the walls and empty classrooms before rounding a corner to be greeted by lively groups of students filing in and out of a math classroom.

"Hey! Are you here for Youth Alive?" Angelina asked a group of students in the hallway as they lingered outside the room. The group paused conversation for a moment and peered inside.

One of the students, dressed in khaki pants and a maroon polo shirt, spoke up first. "What even happens in Youth Alive?"

"Well, we have some snacks, play a game, hear a message from the Bible, and take time to pray for each other. You should come!" Angelina responded gracefully. She moved into the doorway, gesturing for the group to come in.

"Sure, we'll check it out," the student responded. The group entered the classroom, and I followed behind them. The desks were arranged in a circle and another Youth Alive leader was at the front of the room stacking cups for a game. The group of students from the hallway quickly found snacks and took a seat.

One by one, more students walked into the classroom and found their seats. There was a constant hum of chatter and occasional bouts of laughter. I watched while Angelina shuffled around the room to greet each of her peers and ensure that they felt welcome. As the clock reached 3:30 p.m., Angelina stood at the front of the room to get things started.

"Hey everyone, welcome to Youth Alive! I'm so excited you're here today. If we haven't met, my name is Angelina and I'm your club president." Angelina proceeded to share updates and announcements with the group, including the news that Youth Alive was selling hoodies.

From there, Angelina introduced another club leader to host a game: the Cup Game. Students were to pair up, face each other, place a cup on a table between them, and wait for commands such as, "Heads, shoulders, knees, cup!" When the leader said, "Cup," each student tried to be the first one to grab the cup. After a few minutes of laughter and intense competition, the group crowned a winner.

"Okay, everyone, let's come back to our seats for today's message. Here at Youth Alive, we like to read the Bible together, discuss what it means, and share how it can apply to our lives," Angelina explained. "Today we're going to look at the Book of Daniel." She proceeded to teach about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and how they were thrown in a fiery furnace for refusing to bow to an idol. She stressed how God was with

these men in the fiery furnace, and shared vulnerably how God had been with her through her own difficult times.

At the end of the message, Angelina presented the gospel, sharing how much Jesus loves everyone. She then led into a time of prayer and asked if anyone wanted to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. I watched as several students raised their hands. Angelina led the group in a prayer of salvation, then asked for additional prayer requests.

When the meeting was over, Angelina reminded her peers that Jesus loved them, Youth Alive met weekly, and they were always invited to come. She challenged them to invite friends and keep being bold for Jesus. She also invited them to church. As students exited the club, she said goodbye to each of them.

As I left Angelina's school that day, I couldn't help but feel inspired by how God was using her. She wasn't just leading another school club; she was leading a movement for the gospel! God was moving through her willingness to share about Jesus at school by starting a Youth Alive Club. This is part of what we in the Church should be doing—going into places where the gospel is needed, like our schools, and starting gospel-sharing movements to lead others to Christ and invite them into the Church.

The Early Church

In Acts 2, we see a movement of God transpire after the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. The move of God was heard by people outside of the place where Jesus' followers were gathered. A crowd formed and soon began to ask questions about what was happening. Peter, alongside the eleven other apostles, addressed the crowd, preaching a powerful message telling them about Jesus and challenging them to repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was the start of the New Testament Church! In fact, one of the results of Peter's choice to declare the gospel in a public place was

that about three thousand people believed, were baptized, and added to the Church in one day (Acts 2:41).

Not only did the Church start, but Acts 2:42–47 states that it continued to grow as the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to sharing meals, and to prayer. They continued to worship and share the gospel together daily in public, gave sacrificially to help one another, and shared the Lord's Supper in one another's homes. Many who heard the message of the gospel in public were added to the Church!

While regularly meeting as a church community is essential for Christians, many people, including many of your classmates, don't have the benefit of going to church. In fact, many of your classmates may have never even heard the gospel or heard about Jesus. There is hope for them! Just like Peter publicly told the crowd about Jesus, you can tell your friends, classmates, and school about Jesus. And just like Peter, you don't have to do it alone. He had the eleven other apostles with him, and you can have your friends who know Jesus come alongside you as well. Together, you can start a movement for the gospel in your school or in your community, and the Lord can add to the movement and increase the number of those being saved.

A Gospel-Sharing Movement at School

Angelina discovered something special as she started her Youth Alive Club: She didn't have to wait until she was older to lead a movement for the gospel. She knew God was calling her to action, and she didn't hesitate to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. As a student, she believed she could start a club within her school and share the gospel clearly through it.

On a weekly basis, students meet in her club for three core reasons: consistent godly community, opportunities for prayer, and a clear gospel message to those who haven't heard the good news of Jesus. In its simplest form, this is what a Youth Alive Club does. Youth Alive Clubs are most effective when, just

like Peter and the other apostles, members leave the place where they are meeting to share the gospel with those "outside the house." That means not only sharing the gospel in the room where the club meeting happens, but working together to share the gospel outside the room as well.

This is the kind of movement we long to see in every corner of society: a movement of Spirit-empowered followers of Jesus sharing the gospel outside the church and inviting those who are willing to join them inside the church. What if this took place at your school? When you start a Youth Alive Club, you can create the kind of movement where the lost can be saved, miracles can take place, and supernatural unity can be present. We challenge you to put this into practice by starting a club in your school.

Create spaces for fellowship, prayer, and the gospel, just like the Early Church. Imagine the students who will come to know Jesus when you become a beacon of hope to your school!

Starting a Movement

Once you decide to start a movement of sharing Jesus at school, there are many practical steps you can take to see it come to life. First, we recommend connecting with your youth pastor or youth leader for support and resources, which are available at www.youthalive.com. Your youth pastor can be one of your biggest advocates! Then, cast the vision for a gospel-sharing movement to your friends and ask them to join with you. Decide what type of movement you want to create. If necessary, connect with your school to see how you can start your club or movement on campus. Here are some types of movements you could create. Most importantly, pray about the direction God is leading you.

Traditional Youth Alive Club. This is an official school-approved club, just like other clubs in your school. You find a host teacher and you meet at school on a weekly basis.

Youth Alive Prayer Movement. This is a strategy for meeting together for prayer at school, which can be official or unofficial. Prayer movements may function outside typical club hours.

Youth Alive Huddle. These are movements that don't seek school approval or resources and may even gather off-campus to share the gospel when there have been challenges to traditional club approval. For example, a Youth Alive huddle could meet after school at a coffee shop across the street.

Homeschool Youth Alive Club. These are very similar to traditional Youth Alive Clubs, but meet at a different kind of campus, such as a homeschool co-op or neighborhood.

Cyber School Youth Alive Club. Cyber school clubs are for students who attend school online. In this format, the club may have a weekly meeting over Zoom, a school-provided online classroom, or some other digital platform.

College Youth Alive. For high school students dual-enrolled in college, consider creating a Youth Alive movement on the college campus.

When you decide what kind of movement God is calling you to start, plan out what that movement will look like on a weekly basis. Here are important things to keep in mind:

- **Meeting Details.** When will you meet? Where will you meet? How long do you have? What will you do?
- **Sharing the Gospel.** Who is going to share the gospel in the meeting? How will you present it? Will someone preach? Will you show a video?

- **Outreach.** We challenge all Youth Alive movements to have a monthly outreach to their campus as an avenue to share the gospel. What will you do? Who will you serve? How will you present the gospel?

Equal Access for the Gospel

Starting a movement for the gospel at school is a powerful way to share Jesus with your friends and classmates. If you are a public school student, you have a specific right to start a Christian club or prayer group as long as your school has other clubs or groups that meet regularly. The law that gives you this right is called the Equal Access Act. It was passed by Congress in 1984 and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. The Equal Access Act means that Christians have equal access, or equal rights, to have a club—the same access and rights as any other club at the school. There are a few conditions, which we will review, but since we have the right to equal access, let's use that right fully to share the gospel!

If you encounter challenges trying to start or run your Christian club or prayer group at school, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things!*" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to have a Christian club or group at school.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Equal Access Act

The Equal Access Act (Title VII of Public Law 98-377) is an important law that establishes the rights of students to have a club, group, or meeting at school for religious, political, philosophical, or other reasons. Here is what the Equal Access Act states in its first section:

> "It shall be unlawful for any public secondary school which receives Federal financial assistance and which has a limited open forum to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting within that limited open forum on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings."

In other words, if a school has any noncurricular clubs or groups that meet, the school cannot deny a student or group of students the right to meet just because they are Christian. That would be against the law. Importantly, when a school has a student Christian club or group that meets, the Equal Access Act makes it clear that the group must be given the same rights and opportunities as every other student group or club in the school.

This law is powerful, and it also lays out a number of conditions and definitions that are important to understand. The first is the definition of a "limited open forum," because this law only applies to schools with a limited open forum. A school has this if they have "one or more noncurriculum related student groups" that meet outside of classroom or instructional time.

In other words, if a school has clubs (such as a chess club, environmental club, LGBTQ+ club, hobby-based club, etc.), they likely have a limited open forum.

The Equal Access Act states that a Christian or religious club must be "voluntary and student-initiated" and cannot be sponsored or run by the school or its employees. It must be student-led, and the club also cannot be led by nonschool persons like a youth pastor. Teachers or school employees who attend the club must not participate and are supposed to be there for "custodial" purposes. In other words, school employees or teachers are only there to make sure everything is safe and students are behaving appropriately. The club or group meetings can't interfere with the educational activities of the school. The Equal Access Act makes it clear that school officials are not allowed to influence the content of the club or its religious activities, they can't require anyone to participate, and they cannot limit the rights of a group if it is not large enough or if the school thinks it is too large. This law also reinforces that the school cannot lessen, diminish, or try to limit any person's constitutional rights.

The Supreme Court

While the Equal Access Act is clear, it hasn't prevented some schools and school officials from mistakenly denying equal access to Christian students and groups. One school district in Omaha, Nebraska, denied a group of Christian students the right to have a club, and the students challenged the school's decision all the way to the Supreme Court. The case was *Westside Community Board of Education v. Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226 (1990). The school district argued that if they followed the Equal Access Act, they would be violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution, making the law unconstitutional. However, the Supreme Court disagreed and found that the Equal Access Act was constitutional.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female Supreme Court justice, stated the following about the message of the Establishment Clause when she wrote the Court's ruling:

> "Indeed, the message is one of neutrality rather than endorsement; if a State refused to let religious groups use facilities open to others, then it would demonstrate not neutrality but hostility toward religion." *Mergens*, 496 U.S. at 248.

In other words, the Establishment Clause does not give public schools, or any government body, the right to be hostile toward Christians or any other religious persons. Additionally, Justice O'Connor talked about the difference between government speech and private speech, while also complimenting the maturity of middle and high school students:

> "[T]here is a crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the Establishment Clause forbids, and private speech endorsing religion, which the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses protect. We think that secondary school students are mature enough and are likely to understand that a school does not endorse or support student speech that it merely permits on a nondiscriminatory basis." *Mergens*, 496 U.S. at 250.

She also went on to say that because the Equal Access Act does not permit school employees to participate in student religious clubs or groups, the problem of school leaders appearing to establish or endorse a religion was avoided.

Some schools have been known to claim that they do not have a limited open forum because all their student clubs and groups are related to the school's curriculum and therefore they don't have to allow a Christian club. This was an argument the school district in Nebraska tried to make. However, when the Supreme Court examined the clubs the school had, they disagreed strongly. Importantly, Justice O'Connor outlined specific guidelines the court used to determine if a club was part of the curriculum or if it was "noncurriculum related."

If a school tries to make this claim—that it does not have a limited open forum because its clubs are part of the curriculum—the Supreme Court's opinion should be shown to school officials. The Court said that such a club must be "directly related" to the curriculum, and Justice O'Connor defined what this means:

> "In our view, a student group directly relates to a school's curriculum if the subject matter of the group is actually taught, or will soon be taught, in a regularly offered course; if the subject matter of the group concerns the body of courses as a whole; if participation in the group is required for a particular course; or if participation in the group results in academic credit." *Mergens*, 496 U.S. at 239-24.

So, unless the subject matter of a club is actually taught in a regular course, the subject matter concerns the courses a school offers as a whole, participation is required for a course, or participation in the club or group gets a student academic credit, the club is considered "noncurriculum." Under these rules, most schools' clubs and student groups, taken as a whole, cannot be considered directly related to the curriculum. This is what the Supreme Court found when they looked at a sampling of the clubs and student groups from the school district in Nebraska.

Other Courts

In 2023, one school district in California eliminated a Christian club because of its religious beliefs. This club held to a biblical belief about sexuality, and students had to agree with this belief if they wanted to serve in a leadership position in the club. Some teachers and school officials publicly and harshly ridiculed and demeaned the club because of the Christian beliefs. The school district came up with a policy that said clubs had to accept any student into leadership, even if that student disagreed with the beliefs of the club. The school district said that it was to prevent discrimination based on sex, race, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation. However, the Christian

club was the only club the policy was enforced upon. Other clubs were allowed to have members and leaders that were only of a certain sex or gender identity, or because they believed specific things about sexual orientation.

It was clear to the Christian club that they were being discriminated against because of their Christian beliefs. The club members asked the courts to prevent the school from enforcing this policy. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit heard the case and ruled in favor of the Christian club; the school had to allow the club to meet on campus just like other clubs. In their opinion, the court stated:

> "Anti-discrimination laws and policies serve undeniably admirable goals, but when those goals collide with the protections of the Constitution, they must yield—no matter how well-intentioned . . . the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause guarantees protection of those religious viewpoints even if they may not be found by many to 'be acceptable, logical, consistent, or comprehensible.' " *FCA v. San Jose USD*, No. 22-15827, 58 (9th Cir. 2023).

In other words, schools cannot deny Christian clubs or try to tell Christian student groups how to run their clubs in the name of inclusiveness, diversity, or antidiscrimination. Christian clubs and student groups must be allowed to exercise their religious beliefs freely and without school interference.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to have a Christian club or prayer group at school to share Jesus. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following vision board to think through how God will use you to start a movement for the gospel. This vision board helps you get all the "big picture" elements of your Youth Alive movement down on paper. This will help you start to plan and strategize the movement God is calling you to start and grow. Begin by putting down the type of movement you are being called to start, your vision, and your purpose.

Movement Planning Board

Name:

School/Type of school you attend:

What type of Youth Alive movement is God calling me to start and grow? (For example, traditional club, prayer movement, huddle, online, homeschool, college)

What is my vision for this movement? (Your vision is what you want to see happen in your school, friend group, or neighborhood.)

What is the purpose of this movement? (Purpose includes the major things your movement will *do* to accomplish the vision.)

Who are the core team members of the movement?

What are some of the best days/times for us to meet?

Where will our movement meet?

Chapter 5

Sharing the Gospel Through Prayer

Tristan Jepson

Melanie and Brinlee were campus missionaries with a strong desire to share about Jesus with their friends at school and beyond, but they weren't sure how to start. They began to feel God leading them to start praying for their school and classmates, so they started fasting and praying every day during lunch. At first, they started praying in their cars, but soon they got permission to meet at their church. It wasn't long before God started giving them opportunities to share their faith.

Soon after they began fasting and praying, Melanie was going about a normal day. She was sitting in class when she felt God put a classmate on her heart. As she silently prayed for her classmate, she felt the Holy Spirit reveal to her several things the student was struggling with. She prayed, "God, why are You showing me this? Why am I seeing this?"

Melanie waited until the class period ended and then took the student aside and asked her if she could pray for her. With love and gentleness, Melanie boldly shared what God had shown her, and the student began to cry. Not only were the things Melanie had sensed from the Holy Spirit spot-on, but the night before, the student had prayed in desperation that God would show her that He was real and that He loved her. Melanie and the student went into the hallway, where Melanie was able to pray for the student's deliverance and freedom from the things that she was struggling with.

Melanie learned a powerful lesson: Even though prayer can seem routine, it can be used powerfully by God to share the gospel. Melanie's prayer life grew as she fasted and sought God for the lost in her school. She grew in her ability to recognize God's voice. As a result, she was better able to respond with confident obedience to what the Holy Spirit was saying.

As a campus missionary, tune your ear to what God is doing and speaking through prayer. God saw and knew the student Melanie ministered to long before that moment in the hallway. Then, when Melanie followed the Holy Spirit's leading, she was able to use prayer again—this time praying for her friend and leading her to God's power and freedom.

Scripture

Whether it's intentional or spontaneous, we know from Scripture that sincere prayer from a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16). The importance of prayer can't be overstated. Prayer is how we communicate with God. It's also a primary way we stay connected to Him. God invites us to ask, seek, and call upon Him. He even tells us to bring our requests before Him (Philippians 4:6–7). However, prayer doesn't only include us talking to God but also involves us listening to Him. God speaks to us during times of prayer, and it's during those times that we grow in recognizing His voice. Our lives can be loud, but time in prayer helps us to better hear the voice of the

Lord all the time. Just as we can talk to God anytime, He can also talk to us anytime.

Prayer is effective because God listens, speaks, answers prayer, and partners with us to bring about His purposes. We can pray with strong confidence for those around us to come to know Jesus because we know He desires that none should perish but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Scripture also tells us that we have not because we ask not (James 4:2–3). Are we asking for the salvation of those around us? Are we regularly praying and interceding for them? Are we looking for opportunities to pray not just for but with those around us?

Finally, prayer can be a powerful way of not only interceding for the lost, but also ministering to the lost with the Holy Spirit's power and God's salvation. Jesus promised us that when we laid hands on the sick, they would recover (Mark 16:17–18). In the same set of verses, Jesus also promised that we could cast out demons in His name. And we know that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13). So, we should not hesitate to pray at school and beyond with our friends who need to know Jesus. When a friend or classmate needs freedom and deliverance, we should pray with him or her and ask God to deliver through His power. When we have friends that need healing, we should ask to pray for them and, with their permission, lay hands upon them and pray a prayer of faith. When our friends are ready to put their faith in God, we should lead them in a prayer of salvation.

Intentional and Spontaneous

For Melanie, intentional prayer prepared her for opportunities of spontaneous prayer. As a campus missionary, prayer is one of the most important tools in your toolbox. Regularly connecting with God, learning to listen to the voice of the Lord, and praying for those around you prepares your heart. Prayer is also the vehicle through which you can ask God to soften the hearts of those around you. Our lives should include times of

intentional prayer and times of spontaneous prayer, and both are areas that we can grow in.

Do you have regular times when you pray? Are you taking time to listen? Is it fundamental to growing your relationship with God or is it just an add-on? Trust me, I know it can be hard to find time. It can be difficult to quiet our minds from distractions. However, it is absolutely worth it. Not only do we condition our minds and spirits to listen, but we grow in recognizing God's voice.

Are you open to praying spontaneously anytime, anywhere, with anyone who needs it? While we should have intentional, regular times of private prayer, we also desperately need to remain connected and continue to listen to the Holy Spirit for opportunities for spontaneous prayer. That way, when the Holy Spirit wants to minister to someone who needs it, we are ready and willing to cast out demons, pray for the healing of the sick, and lead others in the prayer of salvation. This is one way He will use us to share the gospel at school and beyond. As you work to share about Jesus as a campus missionary, listen closely to the Holy Spirit. Invite God into all the spaces you're in and let Him lead you!

Growing in Prayer and the Gospel

Here are three ways you can grow in prayer and in sharing the gospel. First, you can grow in your intentional prayer life by picking a place for prayer. Where can you have your place for prayer? Maybe it's a room in your house, your car, or a specific place and time when you can regularly spend time in prayer. Here are some ideas and encouragement:

- It could be at your kitchen table in the morning, in your bedroom in the evening, or in your neighborhood as you go on a walk each day.

- Maybe you journal your prayers, listen to a worship playlist while you pray, or take time to sit in silence and listen.
- Whatever it looks like, just try to develop consistency. Build a habit of praying intentionally there.
- Bring your needs before the Lord, ask for the salvation of those around you, and practice both the speaking and listening aspects of communication.

So, where will your prayer place be? Commit to getting into that space several times each week.

Second, you can plan intentional group prayer times and invite your classmates to join you. Whether or not your classmates and friends have already placed their faith in God, you can invite them to join you in prayer. In fact, asking them to join you in prayer could be the thing that helps them put their faith in Jesus. Here are some ideas to get you going:

- See You at the Pole is a great starting point for inviting your friends and classmates to join you in prayer. It's a well-known national day of prayer that is led by students like you. It takes place around the school flagpole, starting about 7 a.m. on the fourth Wednesday in September each year.
- Plan a weekly prayer time in your school. It doesn't have to be overly planned. Simply pick a time when you and other students can gather in a hallway or common space to pray together for a few minutes. Keep your prayer time consistent and invite students to join you regularly. You can start a movement of prayer in your school!

Finally, you can grow in spontaneous prayer by learning to ask, "Can I pray for you?" People all around us have needs. As you notice them, start to pray spontaneously for the needs around you. Of course, you can always pray quietly to yourself, but you can also be on the lookout for opportunities to pray aloud for that person right then and there. God wants to use you to

demonstrate His power and salvation to others. Here are some guiding thoughts:

- Start a new habit of asking your friend or classmate, "Can I pray for you?"

- Look for opportunities to ask that question each week, then commit to actually open up your mouth, ask, and pray.

- When you ask the question and then pray, you are giving the Holy Spirit room to work. Not only can God's power be demonstrated, but by asking this question you will also open the door for a gospel-sharing conversation.

- Never assume that just because someone is open to prayer for healing that he or she is already a Christian. After you pray for healing, ask if your friend would like to become a Christian by placing his or her faith in God. If the answer is yes, then lead the person in a prayer of salvation.

Does it feel awkward to ask, "Can I pray for you?" Maybe at first, but the more often you ask, the less awkward it will be. By asking your friends if you can pray for them and then doing it, you are inviting Jesus into that moment and showing your friends that you believe God cares about their needs.

Constitutionally Protected Prayer for the Gospel

Prayer can both strengthen your own faith and help you share the gospel with a friend, and it is also a fundamentally protected right of every student under the Constitution. At times, there has been confusion about prayer in schools. This is because there was a time (over sixty years ago) when public schools would have daily times of public prayer, and school officials or leaders would help lead or set up those prayers. Often, those prayer times came at the beginning of the day over the loudspeaker or in front of the whole class, in the same way many schools

still say the Pledge of Allegiance today. A lawsuit was filed because of these school-approved and school-endorsed prayer times. The Supreme Court ruled in 1962 (*Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)) that school officials could not direct or host prayer because it would amount to the government establishing or endorsing religion or forcing it on individual students who did not want to pray or participate in Christian faith practices. In other words, neither your school principal nor your teachers can force you to pray.

Since this ruling, many people have mistakenly said or believed, "You can't pray in school." However, that statement is completely wrong. While the Court ruled that school officials cannot direct prayer or force students to pray, *the Court did not say* that students weren't allowed to pray or organize prayer times. In fact, a student's right to pray in school is one of the best protected and least controversial of all the religious rights provided to students. In the same ruling that forbids school officials from directing prayer, the Court also said that *prayer should be left up to the people*, not to the government. Justice Hugo Black wrote:

> "It is neither sacrilegious nor antireligious to say that each separate government in this country should stay out of the business of writing or sanctioning official prayers and leave that purely religious function to the people themselves and to those the people choose to look to for religious guidance." *Engel*, 370 U.S. at 435.

In other words, you have the right to pray in school and the Constitution leaves it up to you, not the government, to lead in prayer. In fact, this ruling actually confirms that the government cannot tell you how to pray—you can pray how you want, even in school.

The United States Constitution establishes this right, and court rulings have upheld the right over time. Since we have the right to pray, let's use that right fully to pray powerfully and use prayer for the spiritual power that it contains to share the gospel.

While we absolutely have the right to pray, sometimes school officials are unaware of the content of the law and court rulings and can mistakenly forbid a student or a group of students from praying. If you encounter challenges while praying in school, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you—yes, pray even if you are told you aren't allowed to. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things!*" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to pray at school.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

Prayer is first and foremost a fundamentally protected action under the U.S. Constitution. In the case of prayer, we are actually given double protection because prayer involves not only the practice of our faith (freedom of religion) but also speaking—so it is protected speech (freedom of speech). As with other methods of sharing Jesus at school, this right is spelled out in the First Amendment:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Prayer is basic to our faith in God. It involves exactly what the Constitution is protecting—the "free exercise" of our religion. The apostle Paul said that we should pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), which means we need to be able to pray even when we are in public spaces like schools. We cannot rightly practice our faith without being able to pray. Because prayer involves speech, which is also protected by the First Amendment, we also have the right to pray and express ourselves to God with our own words.

In addition to the First Amendment, freedom to practice your faith through prayer and freedom of speech is guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, which reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

This amendment makes it clear that states also cannot make laws that forbid us from praying in public or in private, and this includes public school systems. As with other rights we are given, our prayer cannot disrupt classroom time and we cannot force others to join us in prayer—they must do so of their own free will.

The Supreme Court and Lower Courts

In addition to the Supreme Court's statement that prayer belongs "to the people themselves,"—*Engel*, 370 U.S. at 435—the Court has ruled in different cases that freedom of

speech and the right to pray are constitutional rights that must be provided in public school settings. In the case of *Widmar v. Vincent*, 454 U.S. 263 (1982), the Court held that First Amendment rights must be present in public school settings. The Court wrote:

> "With respect to persons entitled to be there, our cases leave no doubt that the First Amendment rights of speech and association extend to the campuses of state universities." *Widmar*, 454 U.S. at 268–69.

While the *Widmar* case involved a public state university, the Supreme Court has consistently relied on this ruling to extend First Amendment rights into public secondary schools and other public places.

In the case of *Westside Community Board of Education v. Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226 (1990), the Court drew a strict line between government-directed prayer and religious speech—which is not allowed—and private religious speech and prayer—which must be allowed. Justice O'Connor wrote:

> "[T]here is a crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the Establishment Clause forbids, and private speech endorsing religion, which the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses protect." *Mergens*, 496 U.S. at 250.

The courts and the Constitution are clear: Your right to pray is completely protected. You can pray, you can invite your classmates to pray with you, and when you do, you can actually be more effective in sharing the gospel than most school officials could be. During school hours, you can do what teachers and principals can't do—pray, lead your friends in prayer, and talk about Jesus. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit said something similar when it ruled to protect the rights of students to pray publicly at graduation ceremonies:

"The practical result of our decision . . . is that a majority of students can do what the State acting on its own cannot do to incorporate prayer in public high school graduation ceremonies." *Jones v. Clear Creek*, 977 F.2d 963, 972 (5th Cir. 1992).

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to pray at school. You can pray privately, you can invite your classmates to pray with you, and you can pray for your friends to be healed or have their need met through the power of the Holy Spirit. You can lead or participate in prayer meetings like See You at the Pole. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to pray and share the gospel.

Prayer Planning Board

Where will your prayer place be?

What are some ways you can try to stay focused when you pray? (Play worship music, journal your prayers, etc.)

I am praying for the following things to happen for the gospel at my school:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

I can invite my friends to pray with me at the following times during the school day:

See You at the Pole takes place on the fourth Wednesday of September. That date this year is:

Chapter 6

Sharing the Gospel with the Bible

Kim Sharp

One of my team members, Tate, showed me an Instagram post by the youth pastor at Crown Pointe Church that caught my attention. "This is my guy Jacobe—preaching to anyone who will stop and listen in the hallway of his public school. Typically, Jacobe is quiet, doesn't say a whole lot. But when there's a fire burning on the inside, you can't help but let others know."

Who is this guy? I was told he takes his Bible to school every day and he shares Jesus with his friends, sometimes even preaching in the hallway. My curiosity was piqued! His name is Jacobe, and he is a junior in high school. Jacobe was going to be in town for a youth convention, so I was determined to get his story.

I asked Jacobe, "What did God do in your life that caused you to have a passion to take your Bible to school and to share the gospel with your friends and classmates?" He immediately responded, "God has delivered me from so much. God has

given me such a passion for Christ. So, how can I not do that for Him? After I was baptized, I had a burning passion to preach. It was a radical kind of thing."

He continued, "Taking my Bible to school is just another way to share about Jesus. I know I can pray, and I know that God is always with me, but I want His written Word with me every day of my life. If you only read it at church, you won't make it in this walk with Christ. It's our source of strength out here."

Jacobe could hardly contain his passion for the Word as he went on: "If we are reading our Bible every day, then why not read it at school? The gospel impacts so many people and changes lives. It changed my life. It changed your life. Why not let other people experience that change, too? God has given me hope, delivered me from addictions to alcohol and drugs. Why wouldn't I share that?"

Jacobe told how carrying his Bible around school opened up opportunities to pray with people. "It's the small things that make a difference. Carrying my Bible around and sharing the kindness of Christ and not hating on a guy at school opened him up to attending church again. Why wouldn't I step out for an opportunity to do that? Why wouldn't I carry my Bible with me?" Jacobe had an encounter with Jesus that ignited his passion to share the hope he had found in Jesus by taking his Bible to school. The more he reads and studies the Word, the more his passion grows. The Bible is simply that powerful in our lives, and it can also be powerful for others as we carry it with us.

Alive and Powerful

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires." The Bible is *alive*! The Bible is *powerful*! These are two easy reasons why we should

carry our Bibles with us to share the gospel, but what exactly makes the Bible alive and powerful? An answer is found in Isaiah 55:10–11:

> "The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. *It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it*" (emphasis added).

What a powerful comparison Isaiah gave us! Rain brings life and growth from the land for the farmer. In the same way, the words God spoke through the writers of the Bible bring life and spiritual growth in us. God's Word produces fruit. It accomplishes and prospers *because* it is active. It plants seeds of hope and cuts through the natural way of understanding to introduce us to true hope in Christ!

Your Bible is your very own "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) that empowers you to have conversations with friends at school. When they notice that you have your Bible or that you are reading it at lunch, it can initiate sharing about Jesus. Second Timothy 3:16–17 actually says that God planned for Scripture to empower you in "every good work" He has for you: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. *God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work*" (emphasis added).

Carry the Word

Just like Jacobe, you can carry your Bible with you around school or around your friends outside of school. It can energize your faith, and it can equip you to share the gospel with others around you. Simply having it with you will be a great way to start conversations about God's Word. Purpose in your heart to accept this challenge—to carry the Bible with you everywhere

you go. This is your challenge, but there's more to it than simply carrying your Bible.

Whether you take your Bible to school every day, strategically once a week, or whenever you choose to do, know *why* you are doing it. You are doing it because God's Word is alive and powerful. It brings power into your life, and it can bring God's life and power into the lives of your classmates who haven't placed their faith in God yet. This is the second part of the challenge: Be willing to talk about why you have your Bible with you. When asked—and you *will* be asked—unashamedly and humbly share how God's Word has impacted your life and how you believe it can impact your friends' lives.

Put It into Action

Let's be intentional and put action to this challenge! There is little that is more powerful than a campus missionary on the move with God's Word in hand. So, here are some simple action points and thoughts to get you started on sharing the gospel by carrying your Bible with you.

- Start by choosing a day to take your Bible to school with you. Prepare the night before so that you are ready to go with your Bible when you leave for school the next morning.

- Determine to use your Bible not only to energize your own faith, but also strategically as a conversation starter. Have it on top of your stack of books when walking in the hallway, sit it on your desk, or pull it out of your backpack and read it at lunch or any time appropriate in the school day.

- This is not just about drawing attention to the Word as a conversation starter; it's also about the sincerity of your faith. Sincere faith means we read the Word regularly and allow it to penetrate our lives, no matter where we are. Your sincere reading of the Word will help to demonstrate

to your friends and classmates how serious you are about your faith in God.

- Choose some Scripture verses on different topics that are helpful to your friends and write them on the inner flap of your Bible or a paper you keep in your Bible. Then you can easily find a verse to share with a friend in need or someone asking for guidance. Here are a few examples to help jump-start your Scripture choices:
  - Salvation—Romans 10:9–10
  - Peace—Philippians 4:6–7
  - Broken Heart—Psalm 34:18–19
  - Healing—1 Peter 2:24
- Have something to give to people you share Scripture with. Here are a few ideas:
  - Have a specific verse written on a card that can be given to someone you have talked with or someone you know needs encouragement.
  - Write all your favorite Scriptures on a card in case you don't have a specific Scripture to share with someone who might ask.
  - Take an extra Bible with you to give to someone who seems really interested.
  - Text or DM your friend a Scripture that you think will be helpful to them.

Keep in mind that not everyone will be open to a conversation, and you may encounter a lack of interest or even hostility. Remember to always respond kindly to others and not react. When we respond kindly in challenging situations, we show how God's Word and His Spirit are at work in us.

Freedom to Use the Bible to Share the Gospel

Not only is using your Bible at school a great way to share the gospel with someone, you also have the right to carry it, read it, and give it out at school. The U.S. Constitution establishes this right, and the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld that right over time. Since we have the right to use the Bible freely, let's use that right fully to share Jesus!

While we absolutely have this right, sometimes school officials are unaware of the content of the law and court rulings and can mistakenly forbid a student from using their Bible at school. If you encounter challenges while using your Bible at school, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to use your Bible at school.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

The language of the United States Constitution in the First Amendment makes the free exercise of religion the right of all U.S. citizens. It reads:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

As Christians, we are unable to freely exercise our faith in God without the Bible. It is the Book that guides our faith and our conduct as followers of God. We believe the Bible is a lamp for our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). We believe the Bible is living and active and speaks to our hearts (Hebrews 4:12). We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, correction, and training in righteousness, and that God uses it to equip us for His work (2 Timothy 3:16–17). We believe the Bible is God's written revelation to us (2 Peter 1:21), that it is without any error, and that it has authority over our faith and our conduct. We cannot freely exercise our faith in God without the Bible, so carrying the Bible and using it in public places, like a public school, is guaranteed by the First Amendment.

In addition to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment also guarantees freedom to practice your faith. It reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Our right to carry the Bible, read it, and share the gospel with it—in both public and private places—cannot be denied by any government, including public schools.

The Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly stated that the First Amendment applies to students in schools. The case of *Widmar v. Vincent*, 454 U.S. 263 (1981), established a strong standard when the Court wrote:

> "With respect to persons entitled to be there, our cases leave no doubt that the First Amendment rights . . . extend to the campuses of state universities." *Widmar*, 454 U.S. at 268–69.

While the *Widmar* case involved a public state university, the Supreme Court has consistently relied on this ruling to extend First Amendment rights into public secondary schools and other public places. Additionally, in *Westside Community Board of Education v. Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226, 250 (1990), the Court ensured individual rights to practice our faith, stating that "private speech endorsing religion" is protected by the Free Exercise and Free Speech clauses of the First Amendment.

Not only has the Court protected the rights of students to practice their faith using the Bible at school, but the Court has also recognized that using and distributing the Bible with the goal of sharing the gospel is a normal practice or exercise of our faith in God. That means the Court has established sharing the gospel using the Bible in public, as well as handing out Bibles, as a protected right. In the case of *Murdock v. Pennsylvania*, Justice William O. Douglas wrote:

> "This form of evangelism is utilized today on a large scale by various religious sects whose colporteurs *[someone sent by a religious group to hand out Bibles]* carry the gospel to thousands upon thousands of homes and seek through personal visitations to win adherents to their faith.

> It is more than preaching; it is more than distribution of religious literature. It is a combination of both. Its purpose is as evangelical as the revival meeting. This form of religious activity occupies the same high estate under the First Amendment as do worship in the churches and preaching from the pulpits." *Murdock v. Pennsylvania*, 319 U.S. 105, 108–09 (1943).

It is both surprising and convicting to realize that the Court has recognized sharing the gospel by carrying and handing out the Bible is a normal and expected activity by followers of Jesus. Regarding handing out Bibles and other religious literature, the Court went on to say:

> "We only hold that spreading one's religious beliefs or preaching the gospel through distribution of religious literature and through personal visitations is an age-old type of evangelism with as high a claim to constitutional protection as the more orthodox types." *Murdock*, 319 U.S. at 110.

In this case, the Court also elevated over other considerations the right to publish and hand out literature and Bibles that share our beliefs, our right to speak freely about Jesus, and the right to freely practice our faith in God:

> "Freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom of religion are in a preferred position." *Murdock*, 319 U.S. at 115.

Rest assured, you can carry your Bible at school, read it at school, share the Scriptures with others, and even give Bibles away.

Additionally, in two separate cases, the Supreme Court stated that while school officials cannot use the Bible or Scripture for religious or devotional purposes in classrooms, the Bible can be used for educational purposes. The Bible is a collection of books that are historical, and it also contains a variety of ancient forms of literature that are valuable for education.

"It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment." *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 225 (1963).

> " . . . the Bible may constitutionally be used in an appropriate study of history, civilization, ethics, comparative religion, or the like." *Stone v. Graham*, 449 U.S. 39, 42 (1980).

With that in mind, you can look for opportunities to use the Bible for school assignments. In addition, if the Bible is being taught for historical or literary purposes, you can use that opportunity to talk about how the Bible has had an impact on your life.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to use your Bible at school. You can carry it around, read it, share Scriptures with others, or give Bibles away to your friends and classmates. You have the opportunity to make a difference with God's Word at school! So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to use the Bible at school.

Bible at School Planning Board

The best times for me to read the Bible at school are:

Some times during the school week when I can invite my friends to study the Bible with me are:

I want to give a Bible to the following friends or classmates at school:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Some of the Scripture verses I will mark and note in my Bible
to share with my friends are:

When I am asked about my Bible, I will say:

Chapter 7

Sharing the Gospel with *Alive in 5*

Aleysha Ayala Santiago

I'll never forget when I realized sharing the gospel could be simple and easy. Until that time, I had always thought that evangelism meant preparing a long speech and waiting for the perfect moment to share it one-on-one with classmates or people outside of school. But, one year at a district youth convention, a new gospel-sharing method called *Alive in 5* was introduced. Then I heard about it again at the National Youth Convention. I began to realize how sharing the gospel with my friends was going to change.

Alive in 5 is a way of presenting the gospel through five clear biblical truths represented by five different symbols:

The Heart: God is love.

The Road Divide Sign: Our sin divides us from God.

The Cross: Jesus died for our sin, then came back to life.

The Question Mark: We need to decide to put our faith in God.

The Flame: The Holy Spirit will help us live for God.

This was easy enough to memorize, and I soon realized that I could share the gospel with anyone, anywhere, in a way that was both straightforward and impactful. *Alive in 5* is even more highly effective when it is printed on a card, booklet, or flyer and handed out for your friend or classmate to keep and think about. In fact, the most effective way to share *Alive in 5* is through the booklet, which is designed to help you have a conversation with your friend that leads to salvation.

When I was a campus missionary, I used *Alive in 5* countless times. During my senior year of high school, I always kept a stack of *Alive in 5* cards in my phone case. Whenever a classmate or teacher asked about the icons, I'd take a moment to explain, then give them the card to keep. The best conversations came when I was able to use the booklet and give it away. Every time someone looked at the card or booklet, I knew they'd be reminded of the gospel.

With a typical student attention span of about ten to fifteen minutes, *Alive in 5* is ideal for a brief but meaningful interaction. It allows students to communicate the gospel quickly and clearly while also helping the listener engage more deeply. The booklet, for example, helps to reinforce the points by guiding your friends to reflect on their lives through discussion questions. Most people are more likely to remember and connect with information when they can interact and think about it directly, so handing out *Alive in 5* for your classmates to keep is key.

One student named Anna in northeast Pennsylvania was trained to use *Alive in 5* to share the gospel and was given booklets and cards to hand out as she had conversations with her friends.

Anna initially hesitated to attend the training because she feared being pressured to do something uncomfortable, believing that sharing the gospel was difficult and awkward. However, she had a transformative experience at the training. As she studied the *Alive in 5* icons, she realized that she, too, could share the gospel with confidence.

On the car ride home, she felt the Holy Spirit prompting her to share it with a friend. Using *Alive in 5*, she explained the gospel to her friend and invited her to put her faith in God. Her friend said yes! Today, Anna and her friend are actively sharing the gospel with their high school's cross-country and track teams. They give their teammates *Alive in 5* booklets and work to have conversations with them about the gospel, ensuring that each person has a reminder of the key Bible truths: God is love; our sin divides us from God; Jesus died for our sin, then came back to life; we need to decide to put our faith in God; and the Holy Spirit will help us live for God. Giving *Alive in 5* booklets, cards, and flyers to your friends as you share the gospel is a powerful way to get God's truth in their hands. It helps them take the truth of the gospel with them when the conversation is over.

Truth in Hand

In Acts 8:26–39, Philip the evangelist shared the truth about Jesus with someone who was already reading the truth of Scripture. Philip encountered an Ethiopian who was a government official in charge of the treasury for the queen of Ethiopia. The Holy Spirit told Philip to approach the man's chariot, where he overheard the official reading from the Book of Isaiah. While the Ethiopian didn't know the truth about Jesus or the Holy Spirit, he already had truth in his hand in the form of the Scriptures, specifically the words of the prophet Isaiah. When someone like the Ethiopian man has powerful biblical truths in their hand, a conversation that leads to salvation is the next step.

Philip started a conversation with the official based on what the man was reading. Philip asked the Ethiopian if he understood

what he was reading, and the man replied that he didn't because no one had explained it to him. This opened the door for Philip to explain the gospel, beginning with the Scripture the official was reading. Philip told him that the Suffering Servant described in Isaiah was Jesus, who had died for the sins of the world and rose again. Philip shared the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection, and how He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.

The Ethiopian official had powerful truth in his hand, but couldn't understand it until he had a conversation with Philip. God used what the man was reading to open the door to a conversation with Philip about Jesus. In the same way this man had powerful truth in his hand, you can give your friends powerful truths to consider by giving them a booklet, card, or flyer that contains *Alive in 5*. Just as in this story, putting the truth in your friends' hands is best followed by a conversation that shares about Jesus. Philip took the time to intentionally explain the gospel to the official, helping him see how the Scriptures pointed to Jesus. Similarly, you can use *Alive in 5* booklets to help your friends and classmates understand the gospel. These booklets not only help you share the message, but they also help your friends receive and understand the message.

Take It with You, Give It Away, Start a Conversation

The challenge before you is to put the truth of the gospel into the hands of your friends and classmates by giving them the *Alive in 5* booklet. That means you should also accept the challenge to always carry *Alive in 5* with you in one form or another. The best way to share it is through the booklet, but cards will also do. Don't just carry *Alive in 5* and hand it out—take on the full challenge by having conversations with your friends about what they are reading. Most people who make a lasting commitment to God do so through a conversation with a friend when the gospel is explained, so don't skip over the conversation. It's very important. When you've had that

conversation with a friend, look them in the eye and ask, "Do you want to put your faith in Jesus?" Be ready to pray with them if they say yes, and be prepared to assure them that God loves them and that you are still their friend if they say, "Not yet."

Flyers and Booklets and Cards, Oh My!

Here are some simple and practical steps you can take to effectively put the truth of the gospel into your classmates' hands and have conversations that lead to salvation.

- Get several copies of the *Alive in 5* booklet. They are available from your nearest Youth Alive missionary, or you can order them from www.MyHealthyChurch.com. They are very affordable, and well worth the investment to share the gospel effectively.

- Keep in mind that the booklet is the most effective way to share *Alive in 5* with your friends because it's designed to help you have a conversation about Jesus. It's not just about giving them the information of the gospel—it's about guiding them to the truth of the gospel by hearing their story and sharing your own.

- You can also hand out *Alive in 5* in card form, and you can even print your own cards by downloading the artwork from www.youthalive.com.

- Ask a friend if you can have thirty minutes of their time to share something important with them. If they're willing to sit with you, give them the *Alive in 5* booklet and guide them through it and asking them the discussion questions. Be sure to think through your own answers to the discussion questions, because it's your chance to talk about how the gospel has worked in your life.

- After you've explained the gospel and heard your friend's story through the questions, look your friend in the eye and ask, "Do you want to put your faith in Jesus?" Be

ready to pray for your friend when he or she says yes!

- Set a goal to share the *Alive in 5* booklet with a friend or classmate at least once a month during the school year. If you do this, you will have shared the gospel with nine different people over the course of the school year.

Freedom of the Press for the Gospel

Putting the truth of the gospel in the hands of your classmates by giving out *Alive in 5*, giving away Bibles, or handing out other gospel-sharing material is not only a great way to share Jesus, it's also a clear right of every public school student. You have a constitutional right to share the gospel by handing out written or published material. You can do this simply by giving a copy of *Alive in 5* to a friend, or by handing out gospel-sharing cards or flyers to your entire school. You can personally hand the material out, or you can distribute it through your Youth Alive Club.

The United States Constitution establishes this right, and the U.S. Supreme Court and lower courts have upheld and helped define this right throughout our history. Since we have the right to put God's truth in the hands of our friends and classmates, let us use that right fully to share the gospel! While we absolutely have these rights, sometimes school officials are unaware of the content of the law and court rulings and can mistakenly forbid a student from handing out *Alive in 5* or other material. Additionally, while schools generally cannot stop students from handing out gospel-sharing material, schools can put certain conditions or rules in place that determine when, where, and how material is given out.

If you encounter challenges while handing out *Alive in 5*, giving away a Bible, or handing out any other gospel-sharing material, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit.

> "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to hand out gospel-sharing material.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

The First and Fourteenth Amendments protect the rights of students to hand out gospel-sharing material at school and in other public places. In the case of the First Amendment, handing out written material to share the gospel enjoys triple protection because it involves the free exercise of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. The First Amendment says this:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Handing out *Alive in 5*, Bibles, or other gospel-sharing material is quite clearly covered by free exercise of religion and freedom of speech. It may be less obvious that this right is also covered by freedom of the press.

Today, when most people talk about freedom of the press, they are referring to journalists who report or publish the news. While journalists do enjoy the rights provided by freedom of the press, this right does not belong only to journalists, and journalists were not the original meaning of the word *press*. The word *press* originally referred to the printing press, which is how writing, opinions, and books were published and copied in massive amounts for distribution to the public. So, freedom of the press means the freedom to print, publish, and distribute anything a U.S. citizen would like to. It means the government, including public schools, cannot stop or censor students who wish to hand out printed material that shares the gospel. Preventing students from handing out *Alive in 5* would mean preventing freedom of the press.

In addition to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment also guarantees freedom to hand out gospel-sharing material. It reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Our right to hand out *Alive in 5*, Bibles, or other gospel-sharing material cannot be denied by any government, including public schools.

The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has repeatedly backed individual rights to hand out printed material, including material that shares the

gospel. In one case involving a woman handing out invitations to religious services publicly by going door-to-door, the Supreme Court cited both freedom of speech and freedom of the press in upholding her rights. The Court wrote:

> "Freedom to distribute information to every citizen wherever he desires to receive it is so clearly vital to the preservation of a free society that, putting aside reasonable police and health regulations of time and manner of distribution, it must be fully preserved." *Martin v. Struthers*, 319 U.S. 141, 146–47 (1943).

The Court also affirmed that freedom of speech and freedom of the press were purposely designed in the Constitution to provide strong, broad, and undeniable rights:

> "The right of freedom of speech and press has broad scope . . . This freedom embraces the right to distribute literature . . . and necessarily protects the right to receive it. The privilege may not be withdrawn even if it creates the minor nuisance for a community of cleaning litter from its streets." *Martin*, 319 U.S. at 143.

Even if government officials or others in the community are annoyed by individuals distributing printed material, the right to do it is still provided and must be protected:

> "While door-to-door distributers of literature may be either a nuisance or a blind for criminal activities, they may also be useful members of society engaged in the dissemination of ideas in accordance with the best tradition of free discussion." *Martin*, 319 U.S. at 145.

The Supreme Court is clear on this—the First Amendment gives you freedom of speech and freedom of the press, which means you can hand out *Alive in 5*, Bibles, or other gospel-sharing material.

Additionally, the Court has ruled that handing out Bibles and other religious printed material in public is protected by the free

exercise of religion clause of the First Amendment. The justices recognized that using and distributing the Bible and other religious material with the goal of sharing the gospel is a normal practice or exercise of our faith in God:

> "We only hold that spreading one's religious beliefs or preaching the gospel through distribution of religious literature and through personal visitations is an age-old type of evangelism with as high a claim to constitutional protection as the more orthodox types." *Murdock v. Pennsylvania*, 319 U.S. 105, 110 (1943).

The free exercise or practice of our faith in God should include sharing our faith with others, and the Supreme Court has recognized this by affirming our right to share about Jesus by handing out printed material and talking about God with others.

Conditions for Public Schools

The best way to hand out *Alive in 5*, the Bible, or other gospel-sharing material is by giving it individually to a friend. Friends give things to each other all the time, and there is no law against this, nor is any U.S. court likely to weigh in on a student giving something to a friend. At the same time, if you or your Christian club at school want to hand something out publicly or distribute something to your entire school, there may be conditions the school can legally put in place. While the right to hand out gospel-sharing material is clearly provided by the Constitution and protected by the courts, the U.S. Supreme Court has provided some conditions under which governments, including schools, can regulate—but not prevent—the distribution of printed material. Lower courts have also weighed in to help define those conditions and protect the rights of students and other citizens.

In *Martin v. Struthers*, the Supreme Court upheld the right to distribute printed religious material in public while also imposing the following condition:

> "Yet the peace, good order, and comfort of the community may imperatively require regulation of the time, place and manner of distribution." *Martin*, 319 U.S. at 143.

In other words, you absolutely have the right to publicly distribute gospel-sharing material, but a public school also has the right to regulate the time, place, and manner of distribution. The purpose of this, according to the same ruling, was in case there were safety or health concerns:

> "Freedom to distribute information to every citizen wherever he desires to receive it is so clearly vital to the preservation of a free society that, *putting aside reasonable police and health regulations of time and manner of distribution*, it must be fully preserved." *Martin*, 319 U.S. at 146–47 (emphasis added).

If a school wants to control the distribution of gospel-sharing material, there needs to be a safety, health, or disruption concern. Distributing *Alive in 5*, Bibles, or other printed material cannot interfere with normal classroom time or disrupt the school day, nor can it pose a health risk to anyone.

In addition, lower courts have stated that schools have the right to put a "prior approval" policy in place for the mass distribution of printed material. So, if you want to hand something out in public to your entire school or to many people in your school at one time (not friend to friend), it's possible that your school could have a policy in place to review what you want to hand out. The courts have been clear that these policies are actually for the protection of the students who want to hand out the material. In one case, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington stated:

> "However, the point of the prior approval policy is to give school authorities the opportunity to identify such libel or obscenity that the students might not recognize in their own writings." *Burch v. Barker*, 651 F. Supp. 1149, 1154 (W.D. Wash. 1987).

The court also stated that prior approval policies are not intended to stop the distribution of printed material, but to help limit any harm that could come as a result:

> "However, school authorities who implement a prior approval process have a constitutional obligation to attempt to control potential harm in any reasonable way before prohibiting distribution of written materials on school grounds." *Burch*, 651 F. Supp. at 1155.

In the case of handing out *Alive in 5*, Bibles, or other gospel-sharing materials, prior approval policies should be nothing more than a formality. It's a process you have to go through if your school requires it, but the gospel does not contain "libel or obscenity," nor will the gospel cause "potential harm," so schools should approve handing out material that shares the gospel. Additionally, sharing the gospel is not only protected by the First Amendment provisions for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, but it also is the right to the free exercise of religion.

The courts have also limited the power of school officials on these prior approval policies. For example, the *Burch* court ruled that a prior approval policy must contain clear criteria and a well-defined process for students to appeal the school's decision if the school does not approve:

> "Where a prior approval requirement exists, clear criteria and an explicit appellate procedure are essential to protect student expression from unconstitutional censor." *Burch*, 651 F. Supp. at 1155.

Additionally, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled that if a school does not have a prior approval policy or does not have clear criteria in its existing policy, the school cannot suddenly create or alter the policy to prevent students from handing things out:

> "What is lacking in the present regulation, and what renders its attempt at prior restraint invalid, is the absence both of any criteria to be followed by the school authorities in

> determining whether to grant or deny permission, and of any procedural safeguards in the form of 'an expeditious review procedure' of the decision of the school authorities." *Quarterman v. Byrd*, 453 F.2d 54 (4th Cir. 1971).

School officials cannot prevent students from handing out printed material simply because they don't like it or personally disagree with it. This was set forth by the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Tinker* case:

> "In our system, students may not be regarded as closed-circuit recipients of only that which the State chooses to communicate. They may not be confined to the expression of those sentiments that are officially approved." *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503, 511 (1969).

Finally, it should be stated that the Equal Access Act applies if your Christian club wants to distribute gospel-sharing material. If any student group or club in your school is freely permitted to hand out printed material, the Christian club must also be allowed to freely hand out printed material. At the same time, if a school regulates all clubs through a prior approval process, the Christian club must also submit to the same approval process.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to put the truth and power of the gospel into the hands of your classmates at school. You can hand out *Alive in 5*, give out Bibles, and pass around other gospel-sharing material. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to use *Alive in 5* to share the gospel.

Alive in 5 Planning Board

We recommend getting the *Alive in 5* booklets—they are the best way to share the gospel using *Alive in 5*. You can order them from www.MyHealthyChurch.com. Use this space to think about how many *Alive in 5* booklets you will need.

Will I hand them out one-on-one through a conversation, hand them out in a mass distribution, or do both?

Will I be the only one using these? Or will we also use them in our Youth Alive Club or movement?

Considering what I wrote above, how many copies of *Alive in 5* will I need for the school year?

If I need help paying for them, who can I ask to help me? (Parents, pastors, etc.)

If I share the gospel using the *Alive in 5* with one friend each month, by the end of the school year I will have shared the gospel with at least nine friends. Who do I want to share the gospel with each month?

Month _____

Month _____

Month _____

Month _____

Month _____

Month _____

Month _____

Month _____

Month _____

I can print, display, or draw *Alive in 5* art in the following places (backpacks, locker, notebooks, etc.) to start a conversation with my friends about the gospel:

I can make the following with *Alive in 5* art on it to hand out to my friends:

Chapter 8

Sharing the Gospel by Wearing a T-Shirt

Tristan Jepson

Janelle got her "Ask Me About Hope" T-shirt as a junior at youth convention. She liked the shirt design, the message, and the conversation-starting appeal of the shirt. At the time, she hadn't specifically planned how she'd respond to questions or thought through how the conversations would go that might come from wearing the shirt. But, as she went through the rest of the school year, conversations began to happen.

"Every time I wear it—joking or not—someone asks me about hope," Janelle told her youth pastor.

The topic of hope is something that everyone, regardless of belief system, can relate to. It speaks to a longing in the human heart. After all, who doesn't want hope? Wearing the shirt opened opportunities for conversations in which Janelle was able to share some of her story and to share the source of her hope.

While the shirt may have sparked the conversations, the real power behind it was that Janelle had given her life to Jesus and was actively being changed and used by Him. She didn't just have a shirt that talked about hope . . . she had *hope*. Her life, her actions, everything about her reflected and was evidence of what Jesus had done. The shirt simply provided a convenient way to have a conversation about it.

Everything about us has the ability to reflect what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives. How we talk, how we behave, our attitude, and even our personal style. Clothing, stickers, backpacks, water bottles, bracelets, etc., can all be a medium for sharing with the world who we are in Christ and what He's done in us. We may not always recognize this opportunity to use what we wear as a part of how we display our faith, but it's real and effective.

Not every conversation Janelle has about her T-shirt ends in someone coming to Jesus or even coming to church. In fact, most people need to have multiple conversations about the gospel before they develop enough faith to believe in God and what He has done. There are also some who immediately change the topic or shut the conversation down when they find out that the hope Janelle has comes from God. At the same time, every conversation that touches on faith, the gospel, Jesus, or the church is a step in the right direction. It is pointing others toward God's love and truth, and it all comes from wearing a T-shirt.

Wearing Truth

Wearing shirts, hats, or buttons, or carrying a backpack that has words of the gospel message and scriptural truths benefits both the person wearing it and those around him or her. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us of the effectiveness of Scripture in its ability to be "sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow." When Scripture is on our clothing, on a sticker, or anywhere someone

can read it, there's no limit to the ways in which God might use it in the lives of people around us. It might be encouragement for someone who is struggling. It might spark interest and a conversation, like it did for Janelle. God might use it to answer a question someone near you is asking in the depths of their heart. We know and trust in the fact that God's Word is active and effective, and the Holy Spirit is already at work.

The Bible also challenges us to put scriptural truths where we can see, read, remember, think, talk about, and teach them. In Deuteronomy 6, the Lord emphasized the importance of talking about His teachings and instructed the Children of Israel to put God's commands in common, everyday places. In verses 8 and 9, we read: "Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." This was a part of the Old Testament Law, and while we aren't under the Law anymore, it's so helpful to wear or display Scripture to remind us and others of God's goodness.

More than just a conversation starter with people who don't know Jesus, wearing a T-shirt that communicates God's message can also be a constant reminder to us about who God is and who He's made us to be. The old saying "out of sight, out of mind" is true—it's much easier to think about things we can see than those we can't. In Colossians 3:2, the apostle Paul wrote, "Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth." We can choose to put Scripture and gospel-aligned messages where we see them; on clothing and things we own are ways we can do that.

Wear Who You Are, Display Who God Is

In U.S. culture, clothing and personal style are ways people express who they are, and I'd challenge you to allow your faith to be a part of that. Just as we don't serve Jesus only one day a week, we also don't express our faith in only one way. Your faith and relationship with Jesus should be a part of your entire

life, and what you wear can be a part of that. When you wear something that displays a gospel message, you are displaying who you are and you are displaying a message communicating who God is.

You might be nervous anytime you take a step toward making your faith public. If you've responded to an altar call or been baptized in water, you may have felt a similar feeling of taking something that feels really personal and private and making it public. It might be scary, but you can do it! God is with you. Let your faith show up in all parts of your life, private and public, home, school, and church.

There can be added pressure when you're public with your faith. However, this isn't a bad thing or something that Christians should shy away from. In our aim to be the same everywhere and to let our faith be a part of our entire lives, we can welcome the accountability that being public about our faith brings. Do you have to be perfect? No. This side of heaven, all of us fall short of God's glorious standards, and we are on a journey of becoming more like Jesus. Follow Jesus, run to Him if you mess up, and be bold in your faith.

T-Shirts, Stickers, Hats, Backpacks, Buttons

What does it look like to express your faith through your personal style as a campus missionary? First, choose things that you like. Just look for items that also honor God, help you keep Jesus on your mind, and express your faith. This isn't about some sort of "Christian uniform," but it can be another way to creatively communicate the gospel. What truths about Jesus have been most impactful or do you wish you'd known earlier? What messages or phrases spark a conversation leading to the gospel? What are creative ways to convey biblical stories or messages? Buy or create items that you like and that resonate with you. Here are a few ideas for wearing your faith to get you going:

- **Find clothing:** Places like conventions, concerts, conferences, and camps often have merch items available to purchase. If your family shops online, there are lots of great options in different styles and at different price points. Ask your youth leaders or friends for suggestions.

- ***Alive in 5*:** Wearing the symbols from *Alive in 5* on a shirt, backpack, or hat is a great way to easily share the gospel at school and beyond. *Alive in 5* was created to help students like you easily share the gospel through the five symbols, so put them on display. You can often find shirts or other merch with the symbols printed on them from your nearest Youth Alive missionary, or you can download the graphic files from youthalive.com and create your own clothing.

- **Wear as a group:** If there are several campus missionaries in your school, pick out a shirt together and wear it on the same day. Consider creating a shirt or something else to advertise an upcoming event at your church or youth group, where the gospel will be shared. When a lot of students wear the same shirt to school on the same day, it's sure to generate multiple conversations.

- **Design your own wearable:** If God has done something incredible in your life recently or you've learned something about Him, consider how you can express that through your clothing. If there's something unique to your testimony that you can put into a catchphrase and wear on a shirt, create that shirt and use the conversations that follow to talk about what God has done in your life.

- **Giveaways:** Things like stickers and buttons can often be created at a very low cost. Consider creating one with a hopeful message from Scripture and giving it away at school.

No matter how you choose to display your faith, remember, it's about sharing the gospel by starting conversations. Wearing your faith isn't about proving to the world who you are; it's about proclaiming who Jesus is. As you prepare for those conversations, think through your testimony. Consider writing it out and practice sharing it so that you feel ready.

Artistic Freedom for the Gospel

Not only is a wearing a T-shirt a great way to share the gospel or start a conversation with someone, displaying your faith with what you wear in public is the right of every U.S. citizen, including students. This artistic expression is actually considered a form of speech. The right to free speech is established by the U.S. Constitution, and several U.S. Supreme Court rulings have upheld that right over time. Since we have the right to this artistic freedom, let's use that right fully to talk about the gospel! While we absolutely have this right, sometimes school officials are unaware of the content of the law and court rulings and can mistakenly forbid a student from displaying their faith with what they wear. If you encounter challenges while wearing a T-shirt or anything that helps you share the gospel, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to talk about your faith.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

The language of the U.S. Constitution makes freedom of speech clear in the First Amendment, which reads:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

In other words, it's against the Constitution for Congress to make a law against the free practice of your religion or faith or your right to freedom of speech. In addition to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment also guarantees freedom to practice your faith and freedom of speech. It reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

This amendment makes it clear that states also cannot make laws that violate our rights as citizens under the Constitution, and this includes public school systems. The U.S. Congress can't take away your rights, and local governments can't either.

The Constitution doesn't exactly make it clear that freedom of speech includes messages that you would wear on a T-shirt, hat, sticker, or button. However, this has been made clear by the same Supreme Court ruling that guaranteed students the right to free speech in public schools, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969). In this case, the Court found that students were exercising their free speech rights by wearing armbands to protest a war. When school officials tried to prevent students from wearing the armbands and punish them, the students asked the Court to restore their rights because they believed they were exercising free speech.

The Court confirmed that the freedom to wear items (such as armbands, clothing, or buttons) to communicate messages is included in the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment:

> "The District Court recognized that the wearing of an armband for the purpose of expressing certain views is the type of symbolic act that is within the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment. . . . It was closely akin to 'pure speech' which, we have repeatedly held, is entitled to comprehensive protection under the First Amendment." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 505–06.

Additionally, Justice Abe Fortas made several important statements about free speech in public schools in the ruling:

> "First Amendment rights, applied in light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 506.

In this ruling, the Court also made clear that freedom of speech for students includes both discussions during class and casual conversations outside of classroom time:

> "A student's rights, therefore, do not embrace merely the classroom hours. When he is in the cafeteria, or on the playing field, or on the campus during the authorized hours, he may express his opinions, even on controversial subjects." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 512–13.

The Court even went as far as to say that it doesn't matter if the content of student speech is controversial or unpopular. Justice Fortas made it a point to say that we are better off as a nation because of this freedom:

> "Any word spoken, in class, in the lunchroom, or on the campus, that deviates from the views of another person may start an argument or cause a disturbance. But our Constitution says we must take this risk . . . ; and our history says that it is this sort of hazardous freedom—this kind of openness—that is the basis of our national strength and of the independence and vigor of Americans who grow up and live in this relatively permissive, often disputatious, society." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 508–09.

The Court also made it clear that it doesn't matter if school officials do not approve or agree with the messages being communicated:

> "School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students. Students in school as well as out of school are 'persons' under our Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights which the State must respect, just as they themselves must respect their obligations to the State . . . They [students] may not be confined to the expression of those sentiments that are officially approved" *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 511.

Limits and Conditions

The Court also imposed some limits on when and how student freedom of speech can be used. They stated that our speech cannot collide with the "rights of others," or "materially and

substantially interfere" with the operation of the school. *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 513. So keep in mind that while we have freedom to talk about the gospel, we don't have freedom to disrupt class, and we can't block or interfere with anyone else's rights as found in the U.S. Constitution. We also can't force our beliefs onto others.

Additionally, the right to wear a T-shirt with a specific message to help you share the gospel may not apply if your school has rules in place that apply to all clothing. If a rule about clothing or displays applies to all students and all displayed messages, and not just Christian students or Christian messages, then it is not discriminatory, and schools can have these kinds of rules. For example, if your school requires uniforms for students and requires a specific shirt to be worn every day, it's unlikely you will be able to wear a different T-shirt. Or if your school doesn't allow any buttons to be worn or stickers to be displayed, you won't be able to wear a Christian button or display a Christian sticker. That doesn't mean you don't have the freedom to talk about your faith; it simply means you have to abide by the same rules as everyone else. You can still have conversations about the gospel with your friends and classmates.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to wear a T-shirt to school to share the gospel with your friends and classmates. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to wear your faith and share Jesus.

Wearables Planning Board

Where are the best places for me to find clothing or other items I can wear that communicate the gospel message?

If I could make my own T-shirt to communicate the gospel message, what message, word(s), or symbol(s) would I put on it?

Who are some fellow believers that I could ask to wear a shirt with me at school?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What day of the week will we wear our shirts together?

When I am asked about my shirt, I will say:

Chapter 9

Sharing the Gospel Through School Assignments

Matt and Lizz Clark

The summer before school started, Grace felt prompted to reach those in her school who didn't know Jesus. Her church had just finished a series about the Early Church in Acts and how those believers didn't pray for the persecution to stop but that they would have the boldness to continue to spread the gospel. Grace wanted the same boldness in her school. She knew that standing up for her faith would be difficult, but she didn't want that to stop her from doing what God wanted her to do.

The school year began, and Grace continued to pray for boldness to share the gospel no matter what she faced. One day in her Government class, she received an assignment dealing with same-sex marriage. The students had to choose which side of the debate they stood for and give a reason why they chose that side. Grace knew this assignment was controversial, but she was firm in her beliefs and was the only person in her class to stand on the side against same-sex marriage. Grace was

okay with choosing that side, but deep down, she didn't want to share anything and wanted to stay in the background. She would have preferred for the class to move on to the next part of the assignment. However, because of her faith and the boldness she had been praying for, she could lovingly share her views and explain why she believed same-sex marriage is wrong.

A girl in the class who had chosen the opposite side of the debate was deeply offended by Grace because the girl's brother identified as gay. Because of Grace's faith and stance in this assignment, this girl began to cyberbully Grace and posted digitally altered pictures of her online and around the school. On top of this, Grace was running for student council, and this girl was doing everything she could to ensure Grace wouldn't win. Because of Grace's boldness in her assignment, she faced bullying, rejection, and peer pressure from those around her. Despite all this, Grace knew that this situation was an answer to her prayers asking for more boldness to stand up for the things of God and boldness to share her faith.

Despite all the adversity Grace faced, she won the election and made it onto her school's student council. Winning that election alone was an answer to prayer and a testimony to God's faithfulness. On top of that, Grace's boldness in her faith opened a conversation with that same Government teacher who gave her the assignment that started it all. One day after class, her teacher opened up to Grace and shared how she needed to return to church since her family had not attended church since COVID-19. Grace didn't hesitate to invite her to her church, and since then, her teacher and her family have regularly attended church. In fact, Grace had the opportunity to pray over and help to baptize this same teacher last Easter!

Grace prayed for boldness and stood out in her faith when it would have been easy just to agree and do what everyone else was doing for the assignment. Because of this faith, God showed His faithfulness, and Grace's teacher found her way back to Christ.

The Gospel Is the Assignment

Acts 17:16–34 tells the story of the apostle Paul in Athens, a city known for discussing and debating all the latest philosophical teachings and ideas (verse 21). While philosophers like the Epicureans and Stoics in Athens talked and taught about their beliefs, Paul chose to talk and to teach about Jesus. His assignment was the gospel, so he debated and discussed through teaching that Jesus was the Messiah the Jews had long prayed for.

His teaching got the attention of several philosophers, who brought him before the Areopagus, a ruling council of the city, so he could talk further about his beliefs. Following Jesus was a new idea for the Athenians, so the philosophers and ruling teachers were eager to listen. Paul took every opportunity to talk about his assignment of the gospel. While other teachers talked about differing ideas and bragged about their ideas as the "truth," Paul unapologetically turned his assigned time toward the one true God as the Creator and Savior of all mankind.

The Athenians were part of the Greek culture of worshipping many gods, and they had public shrines, statues, and objects to help them worship as many gods as possible. Not only that, but they didn't want to upset any of the gods by ignoring them, so they also had an altar with an inscription to an "unknown" god.[8] In his speech, Paul said that the God he taught about was the unknown God the Athenians had long worshipped. In his assignment, he talked about God's nature, purpose, and patience. He even called for everyone everywhere to repent and turn to God. Most importantly, Paul took the opportunity given to him to talk about the gospel.

Interestingly, some people laughed and mocked Paul because of his speech, but others who heard him turned to God in faith. Included among those who turned to God was Dionysius, who was a member of the Areopagus council and an important citizen in Athens. Church tradition holds that Dionysius became the first leader of the church in Athens.[9] Some people believe

Paul's assignment at the Areopagus was a failure because not everyone turned to God, but it was a clear success because a future leader of the church was saved. Paul had an important opportunity, and he took it, even enduring criticism and mocking laughter to communicate the message of the gospel.

Use Your Assignments to Glorify God

Grace also had an important opportunity; she could have chosen to fade into the background, not speak up, and simply move on with her life. But she saw that she had a chance to do something she had been praying for and share her faith at school. Because Grace didn't back away from adversity and used her assignment to share her faith, the lives of her Government teacher and the teacher's family were changed through Jesus. To some, this could have just looked like another assignment for another class, but Grace saw it as an answer to prayer to boldly share her faith.

Sometimes, we consider school assignments to be checkboxes we must mark off to make it to the next one. But what if you and the other campus missionaries at your school began to look at assignments as a way to glorify God? This would affect not only your teachers, who would be reading the assignments, but also the classmates around you who are interested in what you are doing. For example, you can write papers about the Bible, give speeches about topics you believe in, and take a stand for your faith. School doesn't have to be assignment after assignment until you graduate; you can use some of those assignments to make a difference in the world around you!

Looking for Assignments

Maybe you want to use your assignments to share your faith, but you're unsure where to start. Most of the time, you don't know exactly what you'll be assigned until it's actually assigned to you. This doesn't mean you can't be prepared! The best way to prepare to talk about your faith in your assignments

is to continually pray that God will give you the wisdom and boldness to share when the opportunity arises. If we seek ways to share our faith with others, God will show us ways to do just that. Here are some specific ways you can look to share your faith in your assignments:

- **History.** Use assignments to share the history of Jesus, His disciples, or the Early Church, or stories of missionaries and pastors who have been influential in history. You could also write about the impact of Christianity on a particular era. Many historical documents reference Christians of the Early Church, and you can use these to be a witness in your assignment.

- **Government.** Government classes often focus on hot topics or current events, such as the one in our story about Grace. You can use these conversations to take a stand for what you believe in and lovingly show why you believe what you believe.

- **Science.** Biology classes focus on life sciences and usually have a section about evolution. You could use a project regarding evolution to discuss the intricacies of creation and how they point to a Creator.

- **Speech.** Many speech classes guide topics but don't give specific subject material for the assignment. Be creative and find a way to share the message of Jesus through your speech to your class. It could be as simple as sharing your personal faith journey and explaining how your beliefs have shaped your life and worldview.

- **English.** Often, papers or journal entries are assigned to write about personal experiences or stories of things that may have happened to you. You can use these assignments to share your testimony about what God has done for you, what He's done for others, or how He's affected your life.

- **Art.** Use the creative assignments you get in art class to incorporate themes of faith, hope, love, and redemption in your artwork. This could be done by portraying a story of the Bible in sketch, painting out your favorite Bible verse, or sculpting objects that relate to Jesus.

- **Literature.** The teacher will probably have you complete a literary analysis in this class. Doing this allows you to explore themes like redemption and forgiveness in secular readings. In this assignment, you can share the gospel by tying those readings to what the Bible says and how Jesus is the ultimate source of redemption and forgiveness.

- **Service Projects.** You may be in a school club or on a team that requires you to complete so many hours of community service or lead a service project before graduating. You can share the gospel through this assignment by choosing a service project that will show your classmates about Jesus and serve others in a way that spreads the gospel of Jesus. For instance, you could ask a local church to help clean their basement or rake leaves. Or share the love of Christ by serving at your local homeless shelter.

These are just a few examples of ways to use the assignments in your life to share your faith. Pray that God will show you ways to glorify Him and that you will boldly use assignments to share His love whenever you get the chance.

Exercising Your Rights for the Gospel

Using your school assignments to share the gospel is a great way to share about Jesus while also meeting the class requirements of your teachers. You also have the right to share the gospel through your school assignments under specific conditions. At the same time, school officials may be unaware of the content of the law and court rulings and can mistakenly forbid a student from talking about faith in a school assignment. Additionally, as noted above, you can only talk about faith in a

school assignment under certain conditions. If you encounter challenges while talking about your faith in a school assignment, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit ("The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to talk about your faith.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

First and foremost, if you are given an assignment and you can choose any topic as the subject of that assignment, you can choose the topic of faith. For example, if you are supposed to write a persuasive essay or give a speech, and you get to choose the topic, you can choose to talk about your faith in God. Or if you are assigned to create a painting in art class and you get to choose the subject of the painting, you could paint a picture of Jesus or a scene from your personal faith journey. If a teacher allows students to focus their assignment on any topic except faith and religion, that would be a form of religious discrimination.

Additionally, although the Supreme Court hasn't ruled on the use of religious themes or subjects in school assignments or the classroom, in 1980 a lower court issued a ruling allowing for the use of religious material for educational purposes that the Supreme Court let stand—meaning the Supreme Court agreed with the lower court's ruling. The case was *Florey v. Sioux Falls School District*, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir. 1980), and the controversy was about Christmas songs and activities at an annual school Christmas program.

A family was offended by teachings about the Christian origin of Christmas and the content of certain Christmas songs and activities at the school Christmas program. The family sued the school to have all Christian and religious elements removed from the school Christmas program and all other school curriculum and activities. They believed having any Christian elements in the public school Christmas program would violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment—that the school would be endorsing or establishing Christianity.

In its ruling, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit observed how difficult it would be to remove all religious elements when it wrote, "The close relationship between religion and American history and culture has frequently been recognized by the Supreme Court of the United States." *Florey*, 619 F.2d at 1313. Clearly it would be impossible for a school to teach about the cultural origins of Christmas without talking about Jesus, or to have a Christmas concert that completely avoided Christian content. At the same time, talking about the historical origins of Christmas, or developing musical skills through practicing and performing classical Christmas orchestra or choir music, is not the same thing as promoting Christianity as a faith or establishing a religion.

This was the basic ruling of the court—that teaching about the origins of Christmas or the practice and performance of Christmas music does not equal the establishment or promotion of Christianity in a public school. The court wrote:

> "The First Amendment does not forbid all mention of religion in public schools; it is the *advancement or inhibition* of religion that is prohibited . . . Hence, the *study* of religion is not forbidden 'when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education.'" *Florey*, 619 F.2d at 1315.

The court recognized that some citizens will still be offended by the religious content of curriculum when it comes to things like a Christmas program, but it stated:

> "The public schools are not required to delete from the curriculum all materials that may offend any religious sensibility." *Florey*, 619 F.2d at 1318.

The court ruled that the purpose of the school's Christmas program was educational, not religious. It also ruled that the effect of the Christmas program did not advance or prohibit religion. Third, it found that having a Christmas program did not create an excessive entanglement between the public school and Christianity.

In the same way, when Grace (from the beginning of this chapter) was assigned to take a side in the same-sex marriage debate and give a reason for it, the purpose of the assignment was not to promote or establish Christianity. It was instead an educational debate to discuss a legal and governmental issue that was occurring in our nation. Grace chose to answer by talking about how her faith influenced and shaped her opinion on the subject. If Grace hadn't been allowed to answer through her biblical beliefs, it would have been a violation of her rights to freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to share the gospel through your school assignments under certain conditions. When you have a free choice of topic for an assignment or are asked to voice your opinion on different issues in class, you have the opportunity to talk about Jesus. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to share the gospel through your school assignments.

School Assignments Planning Board

What classes do I have right now?

Which ones of those classes allow me to choose the topic for my assignments?

What specific assignments do I have in mind for sharing the gospel? How will I use each assignment to share the gospel?

Notes

[8] "To an Unknown God," in *Fire Bible Notes*, Acts 17:23.
[9] Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius*, 2.4.11; 4.23.3.

Chapter 10

Sharing the Gospel Through Creativity

Tristan Jepson

Leslie could *sing*. Growing up in a very musical family, she'd been surrounded by music her entire life. Leslie had started guitar lessons in first grade, but really started playing when she was thirteen years old. She had—and still has—the type of voice that makes you want to stop and listen. Leslie often sang the national anthem for local sports events and graduations. She acted and sang in school musicals. As a teenager, she was involved in leading worship at her church and helped with worship in more than one youth group. Eventually, Leslie began writing her own songs and expressing herself—and her faith—through music.

The incredible thing about Leslie's music was how it opened doors for her to be able to bring faith into creative spaces. Rather than her expressions of faith being locked into a certain time or place, she was able to use her gifts to share Jesus all the time. While Leslie received an invitation to the National Fine

Arts Festival for songwriting, the more impressive part was that she sang her songs in parking lots with groups of friends, in the halls of her school, and in coffee shops. She sang elements of her testimony and her experiences of God's goodness in life. Her giftings and creativity were infused with her love for Jesus and became a natural outlet for her to express her faith.

It wasn't surprising when Leslie was asked to lead worship during baccalaureate or sing at her class's graduation ceremony—her talent opened many doors. What was even more rare was what she did with it. Leslie not only sang of God's goodness on stages, but her life was marked by it. She had consistently demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit to those around her, and the songs she sang had led to conversations about Jesus. Throughout her high school experiences, God used Leslie's abilities, heart for Him, and love for others to open doors for her to reach those around her.

Sing, Praise, Proclaim, Publish, Tell

Psalm 96:2–3 says, "Sing to the LORD; praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does." There are so many creative ways we can make Jesus and His heart for people known. Sometimes we get stuck thinking that standing up and giving a sermon is the only way the gospel is shared. But, Scripture also tells us that creation declares the glory of God. Talk about using creativity! Don't get me wrong, sermons are powerful tools—but they aren't the only method we use to declare God's goodness. Instead, it's often creative, artistic, beautiful elements that God uses to soften hearts and open doors for those important conversations.

This verse doesn't say, "Publish God's glorious deeds among church people." It doesn't say, "Tell your youth group about the amazing things He does." This verse (and many others throughout the Bible) compel us to tell *everyone* about God—and there's not just one way to do it. The way we share our faith

shouldn't be just in a church building at a certain time of the week. God wants us to use the creative gifts He has given to share the gospel at any time and in any place. Could it be that God wants to use your specific talents, gifts, personality, and passions outside the church walls to talk about Jesus to those around you?

Use Your Creativity for the Gospel!

If there's anything worth doing with excellence and creativity, it's sharing about Jesus. The good news is that it's actually fun and super fulfilling to allow God to use the things you are good at and the things you enjoy doing to proclaim the hope of Jesus. There's a good chance that there are already opportunities around you that God could use. What could it look like to use the outlets on your campus and in your community to find a way to share about Jesus in those? If you're a Fine Arts kid, a band or choir kid, an art kid, or a theater kid, what could you do? Does your school have a talent show? Is there an open mic night at a coffee shop near you? How could you paint or take photographs in such a way that creates an opportunity to tell others about Jesus? If you write, what sort of community outlets are there for writing? Could you submit articles or poetry to local newspapers? If you're on social media, what would it look like to use social media to share about Jesus? Think outside the box!

Even if you're not artistically or musically gifted, there's a good chance you know people who are. Maybe you're in school leadership and could be the one to organize and plan a talent show and encourage Christians you know to share about Jesus at it. The possibilities are endless.

Getting Started

As a campus missionary, be creative! Prayerfully take creative risks and be willing to do things that haven't been done before to share the gospel. Continue growing in the gifts you have and

utilize (or create!) creative outlets around you as platforms to tell others about Jesus. Here are some initial ideas to get you started on sharing the gospel creatively at school:

- **Art Class.** Often in art classes, you'll have a choice of what to paint, sculpt, or create. Choose to paint a scene from Scripture or create something from your own testimony that represents God's work in your life. It's natural for artists to talk about their creative works, so it'll be easy for you to talk about God when you create pieces to show His glory.

- **Choir, Orchestra, Band.** When holidays come around, particularly Christmas, many middle and high school choirs use Christian songs because they are the traditional songs for that season ("Silent Night," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Joy to the World," etc.). There will be a lot of practice and memorization of these songs that were written to bring glory to God and tell part of the story of God's redemption plan. You can start great conversations with your friends about these songs and talk to them about God as you do. Research the history of the songs and what the lyrics mean; that can help to guide your conversations.

- **Talent Show.** Many schools have a talent show, and I heard of one high school that replaced their baccalaureate with a senior talent show. Use the talents or skills you are developing in church to share the gospel creatively during your school's talent show. God has given us our creative gifts to demonstrate His glory and power, so take the opportunity when it's there. If the opportunity is provided, you can directly share the gospel by giving an explanation before you perform your talent show piece.

- **After-School Jam Sessions.** A jam session is a friendly gathering of musicians or artists to create artistic pieces together, just for fun. Consider inviting your friends who share the same creative gifts to work on creating music or art together. You can use worship songs or scenes from

the Bible as ideas for artistic works you can create together. Using these ideas as creative seeds gives you a great opportunity to talk about God and His work in your life.

- **Youth Worship Band.** If your youth pastor approves, consider inviting your musical friends to join you at worship practice and become a part of the worship band. Helping your friends belong to a band that sings and plays God's praises will move them one step closer to putting their faith in God.

- **Fine Arts Festival.** The Fine Arts Festival is a great chance to use your gifts and abilities, as well as invite your friends who don't go to church to become a part of God's family. Invite your friends to enter their own artistic pieces in the Fine Arts Festival. You can spend more time with them in this way and share your faith more easily as you work together to creatively proclaim God's goodness. You can find more information on Fine Arts Festival at faf.ag.org.

Creative Rights for the Gospel

Not only is using creativity a great way to share about Jesus with your friends, it's also something you have the right to do at school under the U.S. Constitution. When it comes to using creativity to share the gospel outside of school through things like your youth group worship band or the Fine Arts Festival, your rights are well established by the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution. They read:

> First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.
>
> Fourteenth Amendment [in part]: No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall

> any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

You have clearly established constitutional rights for freedom of speech or expression, the free practice or exercise of your faith, and to publish your creativity through freedom of the press for all to see (see chapter 7). Not only that, but it's also illegal for states (including public school systems) to make laws or rules that limit your constitutional rights.

When it comes to sharing the gospel through school-related activities, like art class, talent shows, or band and choir music, your rights and opportunities under the law are essentially the same as outlined in chapter 9, "Sharing the Gospel Through School Assignments." Should you encounter any difficulties while sharing the gospel through creativity at school, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to talk about your faith. (See the latter half of chapter 9, "Sharing the Gospel Through School Assignments.")

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You can share the gospel with your friends through creativity both inside and outside school. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to use creativity to share the gospel.

Creativity Planning Board

Here is a list of creative things I like to do and/or I am good at:

Here is a list of the people in my life and creative things they like and/or are good at:

For each of the actions I listed, here are at least three ideas of how I (and/or the people I listed) could express our faith or share about Jesus using that action. (For example, play at school talent show, worship during Youth Alive Club meeting or outreach, play at a summer festival in our town, etc.)

1.

2.

3.

What are some creative things at my church or youth group I could invite my friends to participate in?

What are some creative things I could do at home and invite my friends to that could also share the gospel? (For example, a shared art project, a musical jam session, etc.)

Chapter 11

Sharing the Gospel Through Welcoming

Lee Rogers

"Pastor Lee, I want you to meet Austin!" Jake said, as he introduced me to a friend he had invited to youth group. Austin was a tall high schooler with several piercings and a few tattoos. For a high school student, he appeared to have lived an interesting life. I shook Austin's hand, welcomed him to youth group, and asked how he knew Jake.

"Actually, we just met," Austin replied. "I just moved here and today was my first day at school. Jake saw me alone in the cafeteria at lunch and invited me to sit with him. Then he invited me to come here with him. To be honest, I haven't really been to a church before, but I'm glad to be here."

It was January, which meant Austin was the "new kid" at school in the middle of the school year. He didn't know anyone, so it was easy for Jake to make friends with him and invite him to church. As I spoke more with Austin, it was apparent that he

had a challenging home life. When Jake invited him to sit with him at lunch, and then invited him to church, Austin found a friend and that he was welcomed with Christians at his school and in the church. Austin found a place to belong, and a group of friends to belong to.

It didn't surprise me that Jake was so welcoming because it wasn't the first time he had invited a new student to church. In fact, Jake and his brother Sam had made a habit of welcoming new students into friendship and into the youth group. There was Star, a foreign exchange student from Korea. In spite of the language barrier, Sam made friends with Star and invited him to church. Star ended up feeling so welcomed that he went to youth camp, put his faith in God, and later took his newfound faith back to Korea with him.

There was John, who moved from California in the middle of the school year. Jake took an interest in John's life, welcoming John as a friend when he knew no one. Jake tried really hard to get John to come to church, and although it took a while, John finally agreed. When he did, he found a place to belong and experienced God in an intense way—when he heard the gospel, he made a decision to put his faith in God.

Then there was Kayjay, who Jake and Sam saw as a new student at school and later saw walking along the side of the road. They pulled over, introduced themselves, and gave Kayjay a ride. They welcomed him as a friend and found out Kayjay had been bounced from house to house, recently moving into the neighborhood to live with his cousin. Jake and Sam invited Kayjay to youth group, where he heard the gospel and put his faith in God. Kayjay often needed a safe place to stay at night, so with the permission and supervision of their parents, Sam and Jake welcomed Kayjay into their home to spend the evening on multiple occasions.

Jake and Sam welcomed every new student they could, and many of those new students found their way to faith. At the same time, they didn't *just* welcome new students—they

welcomed every student they could. They welcomed their classmates into their lives, their home, and most importantly their faith. During their time as campus missionaries, more than forty students came to youth group with them and many of those put their faith in God.

Welcoming Hospitality

Welcoming strangers and those you already know is called *hospitality*, and it's not only a kind thing to do, it's a biblical thing to do. The Bible tells us to show hospitality to strangers in both the Old and New Testaments. Leviticus 19:33–34 says, "Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land. Treat them like native-born Israelites, and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God." God told the Israelites to love strangers the same way they loved themselves and to treat those strangers like they belonged there—to welcome them and care for them as they would their own people.

Hebrews 13:1–3 also reminds the Church about the importance of hospitality. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells the Church to keep on loving each other as members of the same family, while also reminding them to show hospitality to strangers. It even says that believers should remember those who are badly treated as though the pain they experience was being experienced by the believers themselves. In other words, hospitality and welcoming others is all part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We need to treat outsiders like they are insiders.

Help People Belong So They Can Believe

Jake and Sam discovered a powerful truth as they welcomed new kids at school into the community—when they showed welcoming hospitality, they also helped the stranger at school find a group to belong to. Not only that, but the group these

new kids immediately belonged to was the group of campus missionaries—committed followers of Jesus—in a school. Think about how powerful this can be in the life of the new kid at school; before he or she connects with or falls into any particular group, such as the athletes or the artists or the academic students, he or she finds belonging with the youth group. When someone feels like they belong in the church, belief in Jesus is just one step away.

When you make outsiders feel like insiders, when you welcome them with friendly hospitality, you are following the Scriptures and making it easier for them to put their faith in Jesus. I challenge you and any other campus missionaries in your school or community to start putting this biblical strategy into practice. Welcome the new kid at school into your life! Invite them into friendship! Don't wait until you're comfortable and know more about them. By the time that happens, you may have missed an opportunity God has given you. Instead, welcome each new student into friendship as soon as possible.

Lunch Table, After-School Hangs, Youth Group, the Gospel

Make a decision now that you are going to be a welcoming person, and if there are other campus missionaries in your school or community, work together to be the first line of hospitality and friendship that every new kid in your school experiences. Here are some of the great opportunities you have to do that:

- **The Lunch Table.** The cafeteria at your school is often where friend groups are clearly seen and defined. When someone is new and doesn't have a friend group to sit with, they can feel very lonely. When you see a new kid at school, invite them to your lunch table. Don't just do it once; do it every day until they know to sit with you by habit. At lunch, get to know them better by asking about their story, their family, and what they like to do.

- **School Activities.** If you are involved in activities at school, like sports, the arts, or any clubs, invite new students to participate with you. They usually don't have to be naturally great at any of those activities to join, and it's a great way of continuing to show them your welcoming hospitality.

- **After-School Hangs.** Friendship can start at the lunch table, but friendships grow when you hang together outside of school. If you and your friends are getting together, invite the new kid to join. Help them have fun in their new community. Keep inviting them until they are secure in your friendship.

- **Youth Group.** If you've invited the new student into your campus missionary friend group at school and outside of school, the next natural step is to invite him or her to youth group. If they already feel like they belong, then this will be a natural invitation. You don't have to be nervous about it; remember that it's normal to invite friends and the people you care about to participate in things that are important to you, like youth group.

- **The Gospel.** If the gospel is shared at youth group or church, there's a good chance your new friend will put their faith in Jesus at that time, but it's no guarantee. Some students, like Jake and Sam's new friend John, take a while to respond. You can show them great hospitality and friendship by personally sharing the gospel with them using *Alive in 5*. As you share the gospel, be certain to tell your new friend how very important the gospel is personally to you, and that you believe putting faith in God will also be important for him or her.

Exercising Your Rights for the Gospel

Showing welcoming hospitality to the new students in your school and inviting them into your friend group is a great way to have a conversation about the gospel and to lead them to

Jesus. While there is no law that establishes or prevents you from doing this, welcoming the stranger and showing hospitality are biblical values, so this is part of our faith, and we have the constitutional right to freely exercise our religion. Additionally, talking with others about Jesus is a well-established right of students in the public school system. The United States Constitution establishes this right, and several U.S. Supreme Court rulings have upheld that right over time. Since we can show welcoming hospitality as part of the free exercise of our faith and we have the right to free speech, let's use these opportunities to spread the gospel!

While we absolutely have these rights, sometimes school officials are unaware of the content of the law and court rulings, particularly when it comes to students' religious beliefs and practices. At times schools can mistakenly forbid a student from talking about Jesus. If you encounter challenges while welcoming the stranger or sharing the gospel, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to talk about your faith.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the

power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

The language of the U.S. Constitution makes the rights of the free exercise of religion and freedom of speech clear in the First Amendment, which reads:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Our Christian faith challenges us to welcome the stranger and to show warm hospitality, as well as to talk about the gospel with those who haven't yet put their faith in God.[10] So when it comes to welcoming new students and having conversations about Jesus, it is both our freedom of speech and our free exercise of religion that come into play.

In addition to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees freedom to practice your faith and freedom of speech. It reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

This amendment makes it clear that states also cannot make laws that violate our rights as citizens under the Constitution, and this includes public school systems.

As clear as these rights seem in the Constitution, there have been many times when public schools have mistakenly taken away students' rights to free speech and to freely exercise religion. The Supreme Court has weighed in and defined student freedom of speech, including when it comes to faith, several times in its history. One of the most important cases that helped establish student free speech was *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969). When it comes to practicing your faith by welcoming new students and having conversations about the gospel, the Court made three important statements:

> "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 506.

> "School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students. Students in school as well as out of school are 'persons' under our Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights which the State must respect, just as they themselves must respect their obligations to the State." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 511.

> "A student's rights, therefore, do not embrace merely the classroom hours. When he is in the cafeteria, or on the playing field, or on the campus during the authorized hours, he may express his opinions, even on controversial subjects." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 512–13.

The Supreme Court is clear and decisive on these matters—the right to freely practice your faith by welcoming new students and the right to talk about your faith are well protected.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

Note

[10] Bible verses about welcoming strangers and showing hospitality include: Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33–34; Deuteronomy 10:18–19; Matthew 25:35–40; Romans 12:13; 15:7; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9. Bible verses about sharing our faith include: Matthew 28:19–20, Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13–17, 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Colossians 4:5–6; James 5:20, 1 Peter 3:15, Jude 23.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to welcome new students by showing warm hospitality and to share the gospel with them as you become friends. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to welcome the stranger.

Welcoming Planning Board

Who are the new/newer students at my school that I can share the gospel with?

What are the best times or places at school to introduce myself and have a conversation?

What are some activities at my church or youth group that I could invite these new students to?

What are some fun things I can do after school or on the weekends that I could invite the new students to?

Chapter 12

Sharing the Gospel Through Meeting Needs

John Ginnan

Nick helps to lead a Christian club at his high school in a city where many refugees are resettling. One day, a friend invited a refugee student to visit the club. The student shared that she was Muslim but was interested in learning more about Christianity. The club members warmly welcomed her, and she soon became a regular at their weekly meetings.

As Nick and his classmates got to know her and other refugee students, they saw the unique challenges these new friends faced, especially during their first harsh winter. Many refugees arrived without the proper clothes for cold weather, which highlighted a need the Christian students hadn't noticed before.

During his prayer time, Nick began asking God to reveal specific needs in his school and community. He decided to raise funds to provide winter boots for the refugee students. He didn't have a big team, but was motivated to get started. By reaching out to

a supportive teacher and a local church, he planned the effort respectfully and worked to ensure the refugee students' needs were met without drawing unwanted attention.

With the support he received, Nick raised over six hundred dollars, enough to buy winter boots for all the students in need. On the day the boots were distributed, with the help of a teacher who worked with them, the refugee students received the boots with smiles. Their confidence grew as they felt better prepared for the cold weather.

Through these small acts of kindness, Nick built connections that went beyond words. He experienced how God's kindness is demonstrated through compassion. For the refugee students, these acts of generosity helped them to experience kindness firsthand and opened doors for conversations about the gospel. As Nick shared Jesus with the refugees, they moved one step closer to putting their faith in the one true God.

Scripture

In Matthew 25:35–40, Jesus underscored the importance of meeting needs with love and compassion: "For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home" (verse 35). This passage reminds us that when we serve others, we're also serving Christ. We can demonstrate our love for Him by loving others in practical ways.

In 1 Peter 2:11–12, Peter encouraged believers to live in a way that reflects Christ to those who do not yet know Him, so that even if they are falsely accused of doing wrong, their good deeds will bring glory to God. He wrote:

> Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable

> behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

By serving others well, we can move people closer to Jesus by creating opportunities for meaningful conversations that lead them to faith in God.

A Call to Service, a Call to Share the Gospel

Nick discovered that meeting practical needs often opens doors for deeper relationships and conversations about faith. He started by looking around and asking, "What do people around me need?" I challenge you to do the same in your school or community. Are there challenges your classmates or teachers are facing that you can help with?

Serving is good, and in serving others we are obedient to the Bible. At the same time, while serving helps to demonstrate God's love, we still need to actually *tell* others about God's love. We need to share the gospel as we serve others and work to meet their needs. After all, Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ." To gain faith in God, people must hear about God. In other words, serving can open the door to a conversation, but serving alone usually won't lead to anyone's salvation. They need to hear about Jesus and make a decision to follow Him. Make it a goal to serve and meet the needs around you, and, as you do, make sure to prioritize sharing the gospel.

Pray for eyes to see the needs that often go unnoticed. If you don't have other Christian friends at school, don't let that stop you—consider inviting classmates or teachers who share your desire to make a difference. You could approach a supportive teacher or coach to brainstorm ways to start a small project. You don't need a big team; small, sincere actions can have a lasting impact.

Practical Ways to Meet Needs

Here are three practical areas where you can make an impact:

- **Appreciate.** Sometimes, the most overlooked people are those who serve quietly in the background—custodians, cafeteria staff, or teachers who rarely get thanked, even student groups who work hard. Write notes of appreciation, give small gifts, hold a recognition event, or give them a shout-out—whatever you feel led to do! These gestures show that you value their contributions and reflect Christ's love. To share the gospel, add some Scripture to your notes.

- **Beautify.** Look for ways to improve your school or community's environment—organize a cleanup day, pull weeds, or paint a mural. Even if it's just you and a few helpers, you can bring beauty to your surroundings and create an atmosphere where people feel cared for. One group of students asked their principal for an idea to serve, and he suggested taking gum off the risers. They invited other students to join, creating an opportunity to grow friendships and even share the gospel with others who came to help. To share the gospel, hand out *Alive in 5* cards or booklets as you serve.

- **Supply.** Organize drives for winter clothes, school supplies, or canned goods to meet critical needs. You can start by partnering with local charities, churches, or school programs to help distribute these items. What do others in your school need? Pray, ask, and find out!

Remember, service is a way to show God's love. Through compassionate actions, you reflect Christ's heart, and your kindness can lead to natural conversations about faith. Let your kindness speak, and when the moment is right, connect it to Jesus! You're not serving because you're a good person—it's because you're motivated by God's love. Ground your act of service in the gospel message—not just in actions, but in word as well. Here are some great ways to talk about Jesus as you serve.

- **Explain the "Why" Behind the Action.** After a project, you can share, "I'm doing this because I believe God's love is for everyone. The gospel isn't something we achieve; it's something we receive." This phrase shifts the focus from just being "good" to receiving God's love and grace freely, just as you're freely serving others. Two great verses to share are Ephesians 2:8–9: "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."

- **Use Stories of Jesus as a Bridge.** When someone asks why you're helping, you could say, "Jesus didn't just talk about love—He lived it. He showed up for people who needed Him, no strings attached." You can follow up by saying, "God sent Jesus to the world to seek and save the lost. He came to meet us where we are, and we don't have to be 'good enough' to come to Him." This opens up conversations about who Jesus is and why His love isn't based on what we do, but on what He's already done for us. A great verse to share is Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

- **Invite Them into the Community of Faith.** As you finish the project, invite others to church, youth group, or your Youth Alive Club at school. You can say, "If you're interested, we get together to talk about life, faith, and ways we can make a difference. You don't need to have it all together—God meets us as we are." This reinforces the idea that faith is a journey anyone can join, no prerequisites or perfection required. A great verse to share is Matthew 11:28: "Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.' "

When you serve people, you have a powerful opportunity to point them to Jesus. While we don't want to treat loving acts of service simply as a means to share our message, our actions can naturally lead to questions about why we care.

Exercising Your Rights for the Gospel

Serving your friends and classmates by meeting a need is a great way to open the door to sharing the gospel. While there is no law that prevents you from helping your classmates, serving others is something followers of Jesus must do if we are growing as His disciples. It's part of our faith, and we have the constitutional right to freely exercise our religion. Additionally, talking with our friends about Jesus is a well-established right of students in the public school system. The United States Constitution establishes this right, and several U.S. Supreme Court rulings have upheld that right over time. Since we can meet the needs of our friends and classmates, and we have the right to free speech and to freely practice our faith through serving others, let's use these opportunities to spread the gospel!

While we absolutely have these rights, sometimes school officials are unaware of the content of the law and court rulings and can mistakenly forbid a student from talking about Jesus. If you encounter challenges while talking about your faith or having a conversation about the gospel, follow these three simple steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to talk about your faith.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

The language of the United States Constitution makes the rights of the free exercise of religion and freedom of speech clear in the First Amendment, which reads:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Our Christian faith requires us to serve others and to talk about the gospel with those who haven't yet put their faith in God,[11] so when it comes to meeting needs and having conversations about Jesus, it is both our freedom of speech and our free exercise of religion that come into play.

In addition to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees freedom to practice your faith and freedom of speech. It reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

This amendment makes it clear that states also cannot make laws that violate our rights as citizens under the Constitution, and this includes public school systems.

The Supreme Court

As clear as these rights seem in the Constitution, there have been many times when public schools have mistakenly taken away students' rights to free speech and to freely exercise religion. The Supreme Court has weighed in and defined student freedom of speech, including when it comes to faith, several times in its history. One of the most important cases that helped establish student free speech was *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969). When it comes to practicing your faith by serving others and having conversations about the gospel, the Court made three important statements:

> "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 506.

> "School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students. Students in school as well as out of school are 'persons' under our Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights which the State must respect, just as they themselves must respect their obligations to the State." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 511.

> "A student's rights, therefore, do not embrace merely the classroom hours. When he is in the cafeteria, or on the playing field, or on the campus during the authorized hours, he may express his opinions, even on controversial subjects." *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 512–13.

The Supreme Court is clear and decisive on these matters—the right to freely practice your faith by serving others and the right to talk about your faith are well protected.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

Note

[11] Bible verses about serving others include: Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 5:16; 23:11; 25:35–40; Mark 10:45; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 6:7–8; Philippians 2:4; Hebrews 6:10; 1 Peter 4:10–11. Bible verses about sharing our faith include: Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13–17; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Colossians 4:5–6; James 5:20; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 23.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to serve your friends by meeting their needs and to share the gospel with them as you serve them. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm the opportunities you have to meet needs and to start conversations about Jesus.

Meeting Needs Planning Board

What are some of the needs I see around me in school?

What are some things I could provide to help meet the needs I see around me?

What are some ways to appreciate, compliment, or build up those who feel down at school?

What projects could I, my group of Christian friends, or my Youth Alive Club take on to make our school better and meet the needs of the school community?

When I am asked why I am serving or working to meet needs, I will say the following to connect what I am doing to my faith in God and to share the gospel:

Chapter 13

Sharing the Gospel Through Integrity

Lee Rogers

"Mr. Goodman, do you have the alternate assignment for me?" Sharon asked.

"Oh, yes, of course, Sharon," Mr. Goodman replied. He walked over to his desk and picked up a book from under some papers and handed it to Sharon. "And I want you to know I respect your integrity."

"Thank you!" Sharon said. As Mr. Goodman handed her the book, she handed another book back to him. The book she handed back to him was the same book the rest of us had just been given in class. It was the latest reading assignment for our tenth grade English class, but for some reason Sharon was given a different book than the rest of us.

I turned to the student next to me and asked, "What's that all about? Can I get a different book?"

"Probably not," the student next to me replied. "Sharon asked for a different assignment because of her religious beliefs."

"Oh," I replied simply because I was a little bit speechless. The book we had been assigned in English class had some foul language in it, as well as some sexual content. I knew that Sharon was a Christian and often talked about her faith in Jesus. But, I was surprised that she asked the teacher for a different assignment for two reasons. I knew several students who were good people and went to church, but none of them had ever asked for a different assignment, and I didn't know that it was even possible to ask for a different assignment.

I wasn't just surprised; I also felt a little bit sad. I wasn't a Christian when this happened, but my family had taken me to church as I grew up. As a child, I had even prayed to ask Jesus into my heart, but I had stopped following God sincerely when I was in middle school. Still, I knew the foul language and sexual content of the book we'd been assigned wasn't honoring to God. I also knew it would be better for me if I would put my faith in God like Sharon. Later I would realize the sadness I was feeling was conviction from the Holy Spirit. God was convicting me of my sin, of His righteousness, and of coming judgment (John 16:8).

After class I caught up with Sharon in the hallway. "Sharon, hold up! Can I ask you about why you aren't reading the same book as the rest of the class?"

"Sure," Sharon said kindly, although she couldn't hide the skeptical look on her face. I wasn't a very nice person in those days. Not only had I walked away from God, but I also didn't mind making fun of anyone who didn't fit it with everyone else, including Christians. "I try to keep my thoughts pure," she said, "and I just don't think it's good for my faith in God to read some of the material that's in that book. So, I asked Mr. Goodman, and he gave me a different book to read."

I was astounded by both her courage to ask for a different assignment and her boldness to talk about her faith in God. I told her, "Well, I just want to say I respect that a lot."

"Thank you!" she replied. "Do you want to talk about faith?"

"Nah!" I laughed off her question because while I was actually feeling convicted, I wasn't quite ready to talk about God. I walked down the hallway to my next class, but I couldn't stop thinking about what she had done. The way she stood by her biblical convictions and fought for the integrity of her faith was inspiring. I thought about it often over the next few weeks. I still think about it once in a while.

Two months after that day in English class, I made the decision to put my faith in Jesus, a decision I've never turned back on. While it wasn't the brief conversation with Sharon that day that led me back to Jesus, I am convinced that her firm stand for the integrity of her faith and our conversation helped me take a mental step toward Him. I began to realize the kind of person I wanted to be in life, and it was a person who followed God with integrity.

Integrity Against the Crowd

There is probably no greater example of young people who stood for the integrity of their beliefs than that of Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael. Their story is found in the Book of Daniel. You may know them by their Babylonian names—Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego—but those aren't the names their Hebrew families gave them when they were born. These young men were captives of the Babylonians, and the Babylonians were trying to educate them in Babylonian beliefs to make them live as Babylonians and worship Babylonian gods.

Changing their names was the first step in trying to destroy the integrity of their faith in God. Their families gave them names that honored God when they were born. Hananiah meant "the Lord shows grace," Azariah meant "the Lord helps,"

and Mishael meant "who is equal to God?"[12] The names the Babylonians gave them were meant to honor Babylonian gods: Shadrach meant "servant of Aku" (the moon god), Meschach meant "the shadow of the prince," and Abednego meant "servant of Nego" (the god of wisdom). Scripture records their original names so we would know the ways in which they were being pressured to go with the crowd.

Another way the popular culture could have destroyed the integrity of their faith in God was through the food they were required to eat. They were offered a rich and royal diet, but the food was against the requirements of the Old Testament Law, so it would have violated their convictions. Rather than go along with culture, the young men went against the crowd to keep the integrity of their faith in God. They asked for a diet that would be in line with their faith, and the Babylonian authorities agreed. God honored them; they looked healthier and better nourished than those who ate the royal food (Daniel 1:15).

The biggest test of the integrity of their faith is found in Daniel 3, when the Babylonian king made a giant gold statue and tried to make everyone worship it. The king signed a law that anyone who refused to worship the statue would be thrown into a blazing furnace. Of course, the young men wouldn't bow down to the statue because they worshipped God alone. Not only did they refuse, but they also told the king, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up" (Daniel 3:17–18).

They went against the crowd to maintain the integrity of their faith, and they proclaimed God's saving power when they talked to the king about it. Not only did God save them from the fire, but God sent a fourth man into the fire to help them. The king said, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!" (Daniel 3:25). Not only did they stand for the integrity of their faith, but they

glorified God in the process. The king made a new law that no one was allowed to speak a word against God.

Integrity on Display, Jesus on Our Lips

While it's unlikely you'll face a challenge to the integrity of your faith that ends in a blazing furnace, small challenges to the integrity of your faith happen all the time. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael learned to keep their integrity in seemingly smaller things, like their diet, before they were faced with larger challenges like bowing down to worship a false god. I challenge you to stand for the integrity of your faith whenever it is appropriate—just like my classmate Sharon. And I challenge you to share your faith, just like the three Hebrew young men and Sharon, as you maintain your integrity. When you're faced with an assignment that would cause you to stumble in your faith, ask your teacher for an alternate assignment and explain that it's because you don't want to harm your faith in God or compromise the integrity of your thoughts. If your friends ask why you have a different assignment, humbly and kindly share that it's because of your faith in God.

Asking for a Different Assignment

The difference between our cultural values and biblical values is growing wider every year. It's highly likely that in your middle school or high school years, you'll be asked to complete an assignment that—whether you know it or not—is a violation of your biblical belief and faith in God. If this happens to you, remember:

- You can calmly and kindly ask for a different assignment that doesn't violate your faith in God. Always remember to do so with respect and honor for the authorities that are over you, such as teachers and principals.

- When you interact with school authorities, remember to pray for the Holy Spirit to help you and embrace the fruit of the Spirit in your conversation: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).

- A teacher or school authority won't just give you an alternative assignment because you ask for one. You need to explain why the assignment is a violation of your faith or harms your practice of faith in God. If you can't explain how this harms your faith, it's unlikely you'll be given a different assignment. It's important that you know and study the Word of God and are prepared before you ask for a different assignment.

- Remember, this isn't about your righteousness; it's about God's righteousness and your commitment to Him. So don't have a self-righteous or superior attitude when you talk about the integrity of your faith. Jesus said that He was humble and gentle at heart (Matthew 11:29), so be gentle and humble in your conversations.

Below are some examples of situations or assignments that Christian students encounter in school that can violate the integrity of their faith, as well some Scriptures that can be used to explain your belief when asking for a different assignment.

- **Reading assignments with vulgar language or sexual content.** In high school, it's not uncommon for English or Literature classes to assign books containing offensive language or sexual content. Scripture teaches us, "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8). Additionally, Ephesians 5:4 states, "Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God." The Bible makes it clear to us that we are to avoid obscene

language and inappropriate sexual content. If you encounter an assignment that contains these elements, you can ask for an alternative assignment.

- **Assignments that force you to affirm transgender lifestyles.** Our biblical belief on these things is clear and has been held by the Church for thousands of years. We believe Genesis 1:27, which states, "So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." We do not believe in more than two biological sexes or genders, nor do we believe we should change our sex or gender. Scripture is clear that our bodies are not our own but belong to God. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:15, "Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ?" He also wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body." If you are given an assignment that forces you to affirm transgenderism, you can ask for an alternative assignment.

- **Assignments that force you to affirm LGBTQ lifestyles.** We believe that LGBTQ sexual practices are a sin, and that God's design is for a man to be with a woman in marriage and for a woman to be with a man in marriage. Therefore, we also do not affirm or believe in gay marriage. Romans 1:24–27 calls homosexual acts unnatural and shameful, and states that humankind has suffered because of this sin. Additionally, 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 states,

  > Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Additional Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments are clear that homosexual behavior is a sin against God (Genesis 19:1–13; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Timothy 1:9–11; Jude 7). If you are given an assignment that forces you to affirm LGBTQ sexual practices or attraction, you can ask for an alternative assignment.

- **Assignments that force you to affirm policies or practices that are against your beliefs, such as abortion.** If you have a biblical belief on a social issue, such as abortion, and it is widely held by other Christians, you don't have to affirm any policy or practice that violates your religious belief. In the case of abortion, we do believe that abortion is murder. We believe that life is present from conception in the womb, and that God is involved in the process of creating and forming new life (Genesis 29:31–32; Job 31:15; Psalm 139:13–16; Jeremiah 1:5). If you are given an assignment that forces you to affirm abortion or other policies or practices that violate your beliefs, you can ask for an alternative assignment.

- **Religion or culture class that gives an assignment to try a different religious practice.** Scripture is clear: We are to worship God alone and worship no other gods (Exodus 20:3; 23:13; 1 Corinthians 10:19–23). Sometimes teachers will have students try out practices from other religions, like songs, prayers, or meditation positions. Although these seem like classroom exercises, they are a form of worship in these other religions, and you should refuse to participate in them. Even something that seems harmless, like yoga, can be harmful because it was originally and is still used as part of Hindu worship. Christian students should be very careful here, as there are different spirits at work in the world, and only the Holy Spirit is from God (1 John 4:1–6). If you are given an assignment to try a different religious practice, you should refuse and ask for an alternative assignment.

Integrity of Faith and Exemption for the Gospel

Asking for alternative assignments to keep the integrity of your faith is important and a great way to start conversations about faith in God. It's also a right of students in the United States. Students and parents can request exemptions from classwork or activities that violate their religious beliefs. This has been established by the U.S. Constitution, by a law passed by Congress, and by Supreme Court rulings. Any request for exemption or for an alternative assignment because of your religious beliefs must be genuine; you need to be able to back it up with proof both through Scripture and by demonstrating the broad acceptance of your specific belief throughout Christianity and/or the Church. If you encounter challenges while trying to keep the integrity of your faith by asking for a different assignment, follow these three steps as a starting point:

1. Pray and ask God to help you. Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added)

2. Study and know the law and what the Supreme Court rulings have said about your rights to ask for a different assignment.

3. Schedule a conversation with your principal. Share the law and court rulings with him or her and kindly ask for the situation to be made right by the law.

If that three-step plan doesn't work, see chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles," for further guidance. Now, if you've prayed and asked God to help you, and you're ready to work through the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, read on to understand what the law says.

Know the Law

The Constitution

The language of the United States Constitution makes the free exercise of religion clear in the First Amendment, as well as stating that the government cannot establish a religion. It reads:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The First Amendment is the foundational right that allows you to ask for an alternative assignment, or to be exempt from any assignments that would violate the free exercise of your faith. Additionally, it prevents the government from establishing a religion, which essentially prevents the government from forcing you to try any other religious practice.

In addition to the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees freedom to practice your faith and protection from the government establishment of religion. It reads in part:

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

This amendment makes it clear that states also cannot make laws that violate our rights as citizens under the Constitution, and this includes public school systems. That means a school cannot force you to do an assignment or participate in a class that prevents the free exercise of your faith, and they can't force you to do assignments or classwork that would involve other religious practices.

In addition to the Constitution, the U.S. Supreme Court has also stated that schools and other government institutions cannot force a belief upon students. In *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943), the Court heard the case of several students who objected to saying the Pledge of Allegiance because their religion would not allow them to. The Court decided to hear the case because the students were having a belief forced upon them when they were required to pledge allegiance to the flag. The Court said:

> "Here, however, we are dealing with a compulsion of students to declare a belief." *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 631.

The Court ruled strongly that requiring students to participate in activities, such as the Pledge of Allegiance, that forced a belief upon them was a violation of the First Amendment. The Court made several important statements that limited the power of school authorities to require students to do things that are against their belief:

> "The Fourteenth Amendment, as now applied to the States, protects the citizen against the State itself and all of its creatures—Boards of Education not excepted . . . That they are educating the young for citizenship is reason for scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual, if we are not to strangle the free mind at its source and teach youth to discount important principles of our government as mere platitudes." *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 637.

In this case, the school argued that students should be required to say the pledge—to go along with what all the other students and teachers were doing—in order to strengthen national and local unity. However, the Court said that this was not acceptable because the constitutional rights of the First Amendment could not be erased unless there was immediate danger. That means

a school cannot compel you to believe something or participate in an activity that forces you to believe something, even if the school believes it will be more helpful to the school community:

> "But freedoms of speech and of press, of assembly, and of worship may not be infringed on such slender grounds. They are susceptible of restriction only to prevent grave and immediate danger to interests which the State may lawfully protect." *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 639.

> "[W]e apply the limitations of the Constitution with no fear that freedom to be intellectually and spiritually diverse or even contrary will disintegrate the social organization . . . We can have intellectual individualism and the rich cultural diversities that we owe to exceptional minds only at the price of occasional eccentricity and abnormal attitudes." *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 641–42.

> "If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein." *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 642.

It's important to note that even when a belief is popular in a community or in a school, that belief cannot be forced upon anyone. That means if a belief is becoming popular in your school and even being promoted by school officials, but it violates your faith in God or your biblical belief, you cannot be forced to go along with it:

> "The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials, and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts. One's right to life, liberty, and property, to free speech, a free press, freedom of worship and assembly, and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections." *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 638.

Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (also called PPRA or the Hatch Amendment)

In addition to the Constitution and the Supreme Court, Congress passed a law called the *Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment*. This law gives specific rights to students and parents. It's important to know that parents have a great deal of authority and rights in their children's education. The PPRA establishes a parent or guardian's right to be informed and to inspect and review all instructional material used in their child's education. This is important because if you request an alternative assignment or request to be exempt from an activity because of your faith, the school will likely contact your parents. If your parents can get involved in your request, it is more likely the school will take your request to keep the integrity of your faith seriously. The PPRA states:

> "All instructional materials, including teacher's manuals, films, tapes, or other supplementary material which will be used in connection with any survey, analysis, or evaluation as part of any applicable program shall be available for inspection by the parents or guardians of the children." 20 U.S.C. § 1232h(a).

The law also states that schools must have policies in place to allow for parents to inspect these materials. 20 U.S.C. § 1232h(c).

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

Note

[12] Donald Stamps and J. Wesley Adams, eds. *Fire Bible Notes*. Accordance electronic ed. (Life Publishers International, 2009), paragraph 6390.

What Are You Going To Do About It?

You have the right to keep the integrity of your faith at school by asking for alternative assignments or requesting to be exempt. Not only will this help you keep and honor your faith in God, but it will also help you start conversations with your friends about the gospel. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to reflect on what the Scriptures say about different topics that might come up in school and how you can use your faith to talk about them.

Integrity and Exemption Planning Board

Below are different social issues that may be discussed or that you may be given assignments for in school. Look up the Scriptures associated with each issue and reflect on what this tells you and how you should approach the issue in school.

ABORTION (Genesis 29:31–32; Job 31:15; Psalm 139:13–16; Jeremiah 1:5)

COARSE LANGUAGE (Exodus 20:7; Proverbs 13:3; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8; 1 Peter 3:10)

CREATIONISM vs. EVOLUTION (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 146:6; Acts 14:17; Revelation 4:11; 10:6)

LGBTQ (Genesis 19:1–13; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:9-11; Jude 7)

PRACTICING OTHER RELIGIONS (Exodus 20:3; 23:13; 1 Corinthians 10:19–22; 1 John 4:1–6)

SEXUAL CONTENT (Ephesians 5:4; Philippians 4:8)

TRANSGENDERISM (Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:15, 19–20)

Chapter 14

Sharing the Gospel with School Leaders

Billy Willis and Madi Landrus

"What about Ms. True?" Madi's youth pastor, Samantha, suggested. Madi had already started a Youth Alive Club in junior high with her friends. Now, as a freshman, she wanted to start one at her high school. There was only one problem: Madi couldn't find a Christian teacher to host the club.

"She isn't a Christian," Madi objected.

"She doesn't have to be a Christian . . . yet," Pastor Samantha replied. "As long as Ms. True is willing to host your club, you'll be able to get the club approved and start reaching students in your school. And who knows? Maybe she'll get saved!"

To Madi, the idea of leading a teacher to Jesus seemed like a far-fetched idea—something she never dreamed of. Still, Madi felt called to start this club and was willing to give it a shot. She approached Ms. True about hosting the club and the teacher

agreed! Everything was falling into place for Madi and her friends to get their club launched. They had one final step: get approval from their principal, Mr. Stewart.

When Madi reached out to Mr. Stewart about starting a Christian club, he brushed her off. Although Mr. Stewart didn't give her an outright no, it felt like she was being denied. Madi was a student leader and had a good reputation with school administration. She was known for being kind and respectful of leadership, but she was growing frustrated. She was determined and wasn't willing to take no for an answer.

Madi began to search in the Bible for guidance and prayed for wisdom. She felt led to write a personal letter to Mr. Stewart. She presented the letter to his office with a box of donuts and a copy of the Equal Access Act, a document that outlines students' rights to use school facilities for religious meetings. In the letter Madi was courteous but direct. She expressed her desire to get her club approved and requested a face-to-face meeting. She still heard nothing from Mr. Stewart. Madi persisted in a prayer: "Lord, please open a door."

About a month later, the door opened! During a student council meeting, Mr. Stewart brought up the subject of clubs because club engagement was down and he wanted to improve participation. "We need someone to compile a list of clubs that are still active," he suggested, hoping for someone to volunteer.

Madi, realizing this was an open door, promptly offered, "Hey, I'll do it!" Mr. Stewart agreed and Madi quickly added, "While I'm at it, can I go ahead and add Youth Alive to the list?" Realizing he was cornered, he gave her permission.

With Ms. True's agreement to host and Mr. Stewart's approval, Madi and a team of campus missionaries moved quickly to get their club going. It became the second Youth Alive Club she pioneered before her fifteenth birthday! Each week at the club meeting, Ms. True heard about Jesus and observed the way Madi and her friends cared for and loved others. For example, Madi

and her club planned a service project painting walls for the high school and invited another nonreligious club to join them. Before starting each meeting, the Youth Alive Club shared a devotion about Jesus as their motivation for serving their school.

After the project was finished, Ms. True and Madi stayed to clean up and began talking. Ms. True asked about Madi's faith and how she loved others without ever compromising the truth of Jesus' teaching. Madi responded, "You can love others and not affirm their lifestyle." They talked for about an hour, and Madi gracefully answered each question.

"Wow! I've never heard about *that* Jesus before," Ms. True said. Madi's faith made an impression on her, and it seemed like she was closer to putting her faith in God, but then the unthinkable happened. One day, without explanation, Ms. True "disappeared." A substitute teacher took over her class, and the Youth Alive Club had to find a replacement. There was a lot of speculation, but none of the students knew what happened to her.

They didn't know if they would ever see her again, until one Sunday morning she showed up at Madi's church! "Ms. True has been at church the last two weeks, and today she *accepted Jesus*!" Pastor Samantha reported. Through conversation, Ms. True revealed she had decided to take a leave of absence from her teaching job. Pastor Samantha continued, "As the Youth Alive host, she had weekly interactions with God's Word, which pointed her more and more to a Jesus she had never really heard of or knew. Ms. True credits Madi's persistence in finally getting her to church. I remember joking and saying she was going to save her Youth Alive host. *Today it happened!*"

Less than a year later, Mr. Stewart also began attending Madi's church with his family. Then, his teenage daughter started going to youth group. Madi's commitment to sharing Jesus at her school impacted not only students, but school staff as well. Madi walked in truth and love. She was bold, yet respectful, never compromising her faith and never giving up or giving in when faced with challenges. Madi gives the following

encouragement to campus missionaries everywhere: "Don't be afraid of offending your teachers by being assertive and standing up for what you believe in, because ultimately, you never know the impact you could make."

Embracing the Call

As a campus missionary, God wants to use you to impact more than just the students; He wants to use you to impact school leadership as well. A great place to start is in prayer. First Timothy 2:1–4 says,

> I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

There are a couple notable takeaways from the apostle Paul's charge to Timothy in this passage: First and foremost, God wants everyone to be saved. As a campus missionary, you don't just impact your peers; you can reach the adults in your school, too! Second, we are called to pray for all people, especially those in leadership. Praying for our leaders doesn't just change them; it changes the way you relate to them by causing you to love and care for them the way that God does. When you have God's heart for a person, you'll be better equipped to share God's plan of salvation with them.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the gospel, He said to them, "I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Just as a pack of wolves can be terrifying to a lamb, being a campus missionary at your school can be intimidating, too. Any time you attempt to share the hope of Jesus with others, you will face opposition and obstacles. How you navigate these difficulties can either help or hinder your Christian witness.

Being "shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves" means you should be assertive and tactical like a snake, while also being gentle and having integrity. That way, you'll be innocent in your witness, just as a dove is harmless.

Also, Philippians 2:14–15 charges us, "Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people." I encourage you to make that a Scripture you live by. Although the gospel will offend some people, you never personally want to be the reason someone rejects God.

Building a Bridge

Just as Madi impacted the spiritual lives of her teacher, her principal, and their families, you can shine the light of Jesus into the lives of adult leaders in your school, too! Imagine God using you to lead a teacher, a coach, a custodian, or an administrator to faith in Jesus! How cool would it be to see one of them show up at your church with their family, knowing that you played a role in them coming to faith! If you would like to be used in that way, I challenge you to begin to pray for them. Make a list of every adult in your school that comes to mind and begin to pray through that list—name by name—on a regular basis. Ask God to awaken their hearts to His love and to their need for Jesus, and to give them a responsive heart toward the gospel. Ask God to give you opportunities and boldness to share about Jesus with them, as well as wisdom in what to say and how to say it. When opportunities don't come your way, sometimes you have to go out on a limb and initiate a conversation about faith using *Alive in 5* as a guide.

Action Steps

Opportunities to show God's love to school faculty and have conversations about faith are all around you, and those opportunities occur every day. Most of the time you just have to look out for them. Here are some helpful tips.

- **Be respectful.** Nothing closes the door of influence more quickly than being disrespectful, rebellious, and argumentative, so aim to be kind and respectful toward the adults in your school. When you see adults in the hallways, smile and greet them by name. When you do those kinds of things on a consistent basis, you'll likely be complimented or asked why you are so different, providing you an open door to share about your relationship with Jesus.

- **Build a relationship.** When it's appropriate, show genuine interest in your teachers as people. One of the easiest ways to do this is to ask questions about their weekend or about things they are interested in, like their family, a hobby, or a favorite sports team. Another thing you can do is ask them to tell you their life story. When you show genuine interest in other people, they'll likely want to hear about your life, giving you an opportunity to talk about Jesus.

- **Offer to pray.** When you can see that teachers or school leaders are having a rough day, you can ask them if they are okay and offer to pray for them. Sometimes, they might open up to you and give you a better idea on what specifically to pray for. At other times, you can pray with them for God to comfort them and give them peace as they navigate their situation.

- **Invite them to church.** This can be especially effective if you already have a good relationship and are inviting them to something in support of you like a water baptism, a discipleship class graduation, hearing you preach or share your testimony, etc. If they don't respond to your

invitation right away, don't be discouraged; the Holy Spirit could use it to spark interest in God, prompting them to attend church at a later time or at a different church.

- **Share the gospel.** An easy way to open up a conversation about the gospel is to ask if you could share something that's really important to you or ask them how they feel about Jesus. Use the *Alive in 5* icons as a guide to help you explain the gospel simply and effectively.

Meeting with School Leaders for the Gospel

If you start sharing the gospel with your classmates, and especially if you want to start a movement for the gospel at school, it's likely you'll eventually need to meet with school leaders. This will be true especially if you encounter any obstacles with school rules or school officials when you are working to share the gospel at school. Then you should request a meeting with the school principal. This is an important point; you shouldn't let a school rule that blocks you from sharing the gospel or starting a movement be the final word on the matter. If you believe your constitutional rights are being violated, you should work to have things made right by the law by meeting with school leaders. You can seek out another method to share the gospel with your friends in the meantime.

Just like Madi, when you meet with school leaders you'll have the opportunity to be a positive influence for the gospel. If you keep your cool and make a conscious decision to represent your faith in God through kindness and respect, it's possible you could see your school leaders put their own faith in God and start coming to church, just as Madi did. When you meet with school leaders, pray and ask God to help you.

Remember, embrace, speak through, and act through the fruit of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, and self-control. *There is no law against these things*!" (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added) Make sure you have studied and know the law when it comes to your rights to share the gospel—use the different chapters of this book to become more educated on these matters.

Know the Law

Not only is meeting with school leaders an important part of sharing the gospel at school, it's also your right under the U.S. Constitution. This right is provided by the First Amendment, which reads:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

It's the last line of the First Amendment that gives you the right to meet with school leaders "to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Public school teachers and principals, by the very nature of their jobs, are government employees and officials. That means you can ask school leaders to consider if they may have violated your constitutional rights and ask them to make it right.

If your principal won't meet with you or won't make a violation right, you can ask the superintendent of schools to meet with you. If the superintendent won't meet with you or make the situation right, you can go to the school board. It's important to note that school leaders don't have to agree with you, but you can still make your case known to them.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

You have the right to meet with school officials in your efforts to share the gospel. So, what are you going to do about it? Use the following planning board to brainstorm through the process of meeting with school officials.

Meeting with School Officials Planning Board

I need to meet with school officials because:

I will ask school officials to meet with me by: _____ .
(Stopping by the office, emailing, calling the school, etc.)

I believe the following religious right was violated:

I would like to see the issue addressed/fixed in the following way:

This is what the law or the Supreme Court says about this issue:

My school officials and their contact information are:

Principal:

Superintendent:

Schol Board Members:

Conclusion

Many Methods, One Message

I'll never forget the night at our home in Pennsylvania when a knock on the door came about 8:30 p.m. At the door was a young woman who would move into the house next to ours. It turns out I had known her when I was growing up. We had played together as kids in the neighborhood and now we were going to be neighbors as adults. After we talked for a few minutes about the neighborhood and her moving in, I shut the door and felt like the Lord said, "There is a purpose to this." In other words, her moving next door to my wife and me was no accident, and God was going to use it to lead her to Jesus.

Over the next few years, I used many methods to serve my neighbor in order to share the gospel with her. We often had conversations when we were outside at the same time. I would serve her by helping her with projects around the yard. My wife and I invited her into our house and showed her hospitality. I took her dog for a walk. I demonstrated integrity when there

was conflict between neighbors in our neighborhood. I prayed with her when her pets were ill. I gave her a Bible. It seems like everything I did for my neighbor was inspired by the gospel in order to share the gospel.

Throughout this book, we've outlined many methods to share the good news about Jesus–the gospel. You can have a conversation about Jesus like John the Baptist did with Andrew and Simon in John 1. You can start a movement for the gospel to share the good news about with those outside the house, just as the disciples did in Acts 2. You can share the gospel by praying for the needs of those around you because prayer is powerful and effective, just as we are taught in James 5:16. You can share the good news by carrying your Bible around, because the Word of God is alive and powerful (Hebrews 4:12).

There are so many methods to share this one message! You can put truth into the hands of your friends, just as the Ethiopian official had truth in his hands when Philip met him in Acts 8. You can display the message of the gospel on your shirt or a hat, just as the Hebrews were instructed to tie the Scriptures to their hands and forehead in Deuteronomy 6. You can use your school assignments to share Jesus, just as the apostle Paul conversed with the intellectual leaders at the Athenian Areopagus in Acts 17. You can use your creative gifts to share the gospel with your friends. In Psalm 96:2–3, we are instructed to sing His praise and publish His deeds, telling everyone about God through the creativity He has given us.

One of the best ways to earn the right to be heard with the message of the gospel is by helping others. You can welcome the new student in your school, just as the Israelites were instructed to welcome the strangers in Leviticus 19. You can serve those around you in need, just as Jesus told us to do in His name in Matthew 25. You can share the gospel message by holding to your integrity, just as Hananiah, Azariah, and Misheal did in Daniel 3—God's name was glorified even though they defied the king. You can even share the good news of Jesus with leaders and those in authority, whom we are taught to pray for in 1 Timothy 2.

I engaged with my neighbor by many methods to share one message—the good news about Jesus and the grace of God through salvation. Eventually, my neighbor did come to the Lord. Through all the methods I used, the message didn't change. My neighbor was able to see my faith in God on display and how it worked in all areas of my life. She knew that I wasn't just a nice person or a good neighbor; the message of the gospel was what had changed me and set my life's course. She knew I was a person of the gospel and that my message was the gospel.

This is an important and final point to understand: We are not a people of methods; we are a people of the Message, and that message is the gospel. As you work to share about Jesus using the different methods in this book, it's important to remember that the point is the gospel. The point of every method is to share the good news about Jesus and the grace of God through salvation. On your journey to tell others about Jesus, keep the gospel at the front. It's not our methods that change people; it's God's message of the gospel.

Appendix

Addressing Students' Rights Issues

From time to time, it is necessary to advocate for your rights to share Jesus at school. Should you encounter challenges such as being told you can't share the gospel, or if you believe you've been unfairly punished for practicing your faith, this appendix will guide you through the different steps that may be necessary to have your rights recognized and restored.

It's fairly common for teachers, principals, and other school administrators to be unfamiliar with your rights, in particular when it comes to practicing your faith. Sometimes principals need more time to investigate the law, and advocating for your rights may be part of their own learning process. This is normal, and often happens with new or young school administrators. Don't panic and definitely don't give up!

Show God's Love in Everything

In all your conversations and discussions with school leadership, remember the following:

- Even when we're frustrated, it's important to remain calm and polite to better show the love of God to school leaders. At the same time, you must stay firm and determined in your commitment to share the gospel and exercise your faith at school.

- Ask God for the Holy Spirit to guide you in showing the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

- God is glorified and shown through and in us when we remain calm and polite while staying firmly committed in sharing our faith. This is called perseverance.

- Concentrate on building trust with the administration and your principal. Demonstrate your credibility and confidence to them. Give them time to understand how your club will benefit the school.

The Conversation Phase

When the need comes to advocate for your religious rights, the first step in the process is conversation with the authorities in your school building. Most issues regarding your rights to share the gospel and practice your faith at school can be solved by talking about it with your teacher or principal. While there are times that it's necessary to involve lawyers and potentially courts, that's not the first step and should be considered as a last resort. Instead of immediately going to the last resort, start by talking to your school leadership about the issue. You may have the opportunity to share your faith with them in the process.

Keep Your Parents Informed

It's important to keep your parents informed about what is happening. Your parents can help you advocate for your rights, and schools are often more likely to listen to parents than to students. Regardless of whether your parents get involved, it's important that you keep them informed. If your parents aren't believers, this could be a great opportunity to share the gospel with them. If they are believers, ask them to pray with you about what is happening.

Create a Written Record

It's important to keep a written record of the incident during which you believe your rights were denied. Record in detail what happened; include the date, time, and names of students and/or teachers or principals involved. Record what you were trying to do and what happened that prevented you from doing it. Record what was said by each person involved, particularly what you and school authorities said. It's also important that you record in writing what happens during any following conversations. In the event the first or second conversation doesn't fix the issue and further action is required, you'll want to have a written record.

Know the Law

Before you have the conversation with the authorities in your school building, educate yourself on what the law says. Details of your rights to share the gospel and practice your faith at school are found in each chapter of this book. Read, research, and, if necessary, download and print out the relevant law and court rulings that establish the right you are advocating for.

Download full copies of applicable laws and court rulings here. Be sure to pay close attention to the highlighted sections.

Talking with Your Teacher and/or Principal

Request a meeting with the teacher or principal involved in preventing you from exercising your rights. Using your written record, kindly and gently explain what happened and why you believe it was a violation of your rights under the law. Share copies of the relevant law or court rulings with them, as well as the highlighted or important sections. Sincerely communicate why what happened was wrong. Kindly ask firm and challenging questions, like these:

- What is preventing this law or court ruling from applying to our school?
- Have I been prevented from exercising these rights because it involves my religious belief?
- If other students can exercise these rights (free speech, etc.), why can't I?
- What are the challenges preventing me from being able to exercise my rights?
- What can we do to overcome these challenges to my rights?

If this conversation doesn't change things and you still believe your rights have been violated, it's time to take the conversation to the next level. If you've been speaking with a teacher, let the teacher know that you will be talking with the principal about this issue. Be sure to add everything the teacher said in your written record of events. Then repeat this process with the school building principal.

Parent Involvement

If your conversation with a principal doesn't resolve the issue, you should ask your parents to get involved. Ask them to speak to the school principal with you. Present your case again, and ask your parents to advocate for your rights by requesting that the principal take the necessary steps to resolve the issue.

The Next Level(s) of Conversation

If the conversation with the school building principal doesn't resolve the issue, even with your parents involved, then it's time to take the conversation to the next level of school authorities. Be sure to add to your written record of the incident by noting what was said and what happened during your meeting with the principal. In most cases, the authority over a school building principal will be the school district superintendent. Let the principal know you will be speaking with the superintendent's office about this incident. If possible, you and/or your parents should request an appointment with the superintendent. As you did previously, share with your superintendent what happened, why you believe it was wrong, and copies of the law and/or court rulings, and ask the same questions. If you are unable to get a meeting with the superintendent, try to meet with school board members.

If the conversation with your superintendent doesn't fix the issue, the next level is with school board members. Be sure to add to your written record of the incident by noting what was said and what happened during your meeting with the superintendent, and inform the superintendent that you will be speaking with school board members. School board members often have a lot of influence over school policy and personnel like superintendents. School board members are elected and answer to the people who elected them. You can most likely find a listing of school board members on your school district website, or by contacting the superintendent's office. You and/or your parents should attempt to make appointments

to speak with as many school board members as possible. As you did previously, share with each school board member what happened and why you believe it was wrong.Then give them copies of the law and/or court rulings, and ask the same questions.

If you are unable to meet with school board members, you and/or your parents can address the school board during the next available school board meeting. Keep in mind that the public is usually given time to speak at these meetings, but the time is limited. If you are unable to resolve the issue through a school board meeting, through the superintendent's office, or by meeting with your principal, then the conversation phase is over and it's time to move to the next phase. As always, be sure to add to your written record of the incident by noting what was said and what happened during your meetings with school board members or at the school board meeting.

The Confrontation Phase

If you are unable to fix the issue through conversations with school authorities, it may be time to get outside legal help. Before doing so, be sure you have read this book's chapter 2, "Overcoming Obstacles." You may still have a lot of options to share the gospel before confronting your school authorities with a lawyer's help.

If you have prayed about it, talked with your parents, and believe you should keep advocating for your rights, you can seek legal help. This should be considered a last resort. Legal disputes—including those over religious rights—can be long, drawn out, and stressful. It can also cause conflict between you and those you want to share the gospel with, so make sure the Holy Spirit is leading you in this way before you proceed. If you believe God is leading you to get legal help, you may be able to find help through these options:

- **State-Specific Religious Rights Groups.** In many states, there are legal advocacy groups that work for

the religious rights of citizens specifically within that state. These state-level groups are usually more likely to take up your dispute and advocate for you. Search the Internet for the following term: "[Name of your state] religious rights advocacy group." If you find a group, contact them to see if they are willing to help.

- **National Religious Rights Advocacy Groups.** We recommend the group Alliance Defending Freedom. Check out their website at www.adflegal.org.

Some organizations that advocate for religious rights do so at no cost to you (this is called "pro bono" representation), while other lawyers will expect payment for their services. Keep that in mind when you reach out for help and be sure to ask about costs before you move forward.

Most lawyers will begin by trying to have a conversation with school authorities before taking court action, just as you did. Since they are lawyers, the school authorities will likely give attention to what they have to say, even if they don't agree. Keep in mind that if your case goes to court, it can take years to get a result, and you may no longer be a student by the time the case is settled. With that in mind, keep working to share the gospel at school in other ways while you wait for a result.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. YOU CAN START RIGHT NOW—RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE.

A campus missionary is simply a student who says, "Yes, I'll share about Jesus with the people around me." And the truth is, there might not be a place in the country that needs the gospel more than your school.

Middle schools and high schools are packed with students who are looking for hope, meaning, and real answers—and God wants to use you to reach them. Your school (or your neighborhood, if you're homeschooled) is one of the biggest and most wide-open mission fields in the world. But here's the thing: only students can truly reach other students. That's where you come in. If you're willing, God can use you to make an eternal impact right where you are.

The Campus Missionary Guidebook will give you real, practical ways to live out your faith and share Jesus at school. It'll also help you understand your rights as a student, so you can step out in confidence knowing you're supported by the law—and by something way bigger than the law: God's calling on your life.

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