



Faith In Action Series:

Thoughts and devotions written by the younger generation of
our denomination and their leaders
Stories of Growing in Grace

Week 3

June 15

Rev. Josh Grimm

Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) Campus Minister

Queens University of Charlotte

Lessons from the Church from RUF Campus Ministry

I'm thankful to be serving as an RUF campus minister sent by First Presbytery for many reasons. But one thing I'm especially excited about is how RUF, unique among campus ministries as one officially sent by the Church, can serve and encourage the Church. Here are two simple ministry lessons I've been learning that I hope can also challenge and encourage you:

1) Know your surroundings

My son Isaac will turn 2 this month. He easily bumps into things and falls over because he doesn't look around or notice my foot (sorry, son!).

In campus ministry there are a lot of two-year-old moments as we figure things out! In order to effectively gather students and equip them to love their campus within the limited time frame of a school year, we have to be very aware of our cultural and relational surroundings. In Acts 17:16-34, Paul urgently picks up on his surroundings in Athens and finds an opening to share the gospel. At Queens University, we're learning how to speak into a campus culture focused on achievement, community, and diversity.

For Reflection:

- What can you do to better understand the culture of your neighborhood, workplace, and the community surrounding your church? What're some characteristics of those cultures?
- How would a better grasp of those people and cultures help you more effectively share your faith?

2) Be ready to coach up

In RUF we're continually identifying and training leaders. A distinctive of RUF is sending an ordained, seminary-trained pastor to campus with the mission of "reaching students for Christ and equipping students to serve." In keeping with Ephesians 4:12, we want to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" for the long haul of the Christian life, training students to lead Bible studies, fellowship groups, and intentionally meet with their peers. Our prayer is that we are raising up future leaders for the Church!

Investing in young people and coaching them up for age-appropriate leadership and service always involves risks and messiness. But equipping younger generations is part of how the Church grows "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

For Reflection:

- How can you take appropriate risks in developing leaders, whether in your church or in raising up your children?
- If you're a church leader, are you looking to see who's on your "bench" of future servant leaders?

Bio:

Rev. Josh Grimm is an ARP minister in First Presbytery and the planter/campus minister of RUF at Queens University of Charlotte. He's married to Ashley, a pediatric nurse, and they have two children, Isaac (2) and Ruby (4 months). You can email him at josh.grimm@ruf.org, follow RUF at Queens on Facebook and Instagram @queensruf, and find more information at <http://ruf.org/ministry/queens-university-of-charlotte1>.



June 16

Rev. Justin Westmoreland

Trinity Presbyterian, Norman, OK

Boldly Challenging Foolish Statements

“Would you allow me to just push back a little on something you just said?” Our disciples say the darndest things - sometimes preposterous, foolish, unbiblical and Christ dishonoring things. How should one respond? I want to make a case for us to deploy the above question, often. Yesterday, two different individuals in one-on-one meetings with me raised the same objection, “the Bible is boring.” These words came from a 23 year old dark-skinned man & a 68 year old light-skinned woman. Wrong assertions are truly cross-cultural; however, what also transcends culture is that precious souls are full of potential if they believed the gospel. So I asked permission, “Would you allow me...?”

First, I asked, “What do you mean?” and “Can you give me an example?” One example was absurd and one was quite an astute point, but both beliefs had one fatal flaw. The “Bible is boring” is 100% untrue. As an example, one of the accusers cited that Scripture speaks of executing a man who gathered wood on the Sabbath. I pointed out that a story about a people consulting God’s advice on what to do with a Sabbath breaker, followed by the response that they must execute him, was not boring at all. It was truly the most remarkable and interesting thing I had heard all day! “Now, would you allow me...?” I said.

I spent the next moments explaining big picture themes. Man was created for unbreakable fellowship with God. Adam lost that. The rest of the Bible is about God dealing with our sin problem in Christ and restoring believers who trust in God through the power of the Spirit to that everlasting joy which they seek in creation, which alone can be found in unbreakable eternal fellowship with the Creator. The man in the story above felt the curse, but how compelling is it that God sent Christ to be that curse for all who trust in him?

Life in a secular world means that each believer must become a trainer or guide addressing wrong assumptions about the Bible and steering folks from the wrong path. The Bible is like a fitness gym. Like a gym, we all know the Bible should make us spiritually fit, but some have no idea how to use the equipment before us. How will they know how to use the Scriptures if we do not read with them and lead them to understand each text in light of the thrilling big picture? We must sit and listen and then ask permission to push back against folly and wrong assumptions. “The Bible is boring,” is unnecessary baggage our secular neighbors carry that causes them to miss Jesus. A little, “Would you allow me to...?” could help them immensely.

June 17

Madelyn Nettles

Converse College

Tirzah ARP Church

There Is Nothing My God Cannot Do

My entire life, I have been overcome by some state of fear. This fear has led me to be shy, silent, and even invisible. This fear has led me to being shy in a room full of people at a get-together, being silent in the back of my class because I'm afraid of feeling or being seen as stupid, and trying to be invisible due to shame or embarrassment. You might be thinking, "What does this college student have to be afraid of?" My answer: not being good enough. God's answer: nothing.

If you'd have told me five years ago that I would be a sophomore in college chasing my dream of being a music teacher and darn well succeeding at it, I would have laughed at you. If you'd have also told me five years ago that I'd be a camp counselor at Bethelwoods Camp and Conference Center, I'd have laughed first, then thought, "Could I actually do that?" But God had plans.

When I was a sophomore in high school, I auditioned for South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. This is a boarding school in Greenville for the artistically gifted. I was accepted for piano, and even though I was petrified, I went for it. Those two years of my life were the hardest. Let me just tell you that leaving home and trying to live in a college environment the last two years of your high school career is no easy feat. Every piano lesson I took, every test I took, and every day I woke up I kept thinking, "Can I actually do this?" The amount of stress I went through was almost unbearable, but God kept showing me that I could do it.

I graduated high school, and then I went to college. I kept getting hurdles I had to jump through. All the while, I always asked myself, "Can I seriously do this?" God kept saying, "Yes," while every inch of me said, "no." Now we are here; I'm now a rising junior in college who is about to go work as a camp counselor for the second year. We're about to train for two weeks in everything from archery to building a fire, and I keep asking myself, "Can I do this?" But it doesn't matter what I have to ask. It matters what God says. My life thus far has consisted of me doubting myself, when in fact, my Father in Heaven is my biggest cheerleader. He has led me to do things I didn't know were possible. My biggest lesson I've learned is that God always has the final say. He's the one running this show, you just get a front row seat.

Luke 1:37 says, "*For there is nothing that God cannot do.*"

June 18

Mariah Stewart

Go Do

My relationship with God is characterized by Him pointing to the one thing I don't want to do and then saying, "Go do that." Yes, THAT thing- that uncomfortable, embarrassing, terrifying thing. And no, not anybody else – YOU.

It all started in sixth grade at a summer youth Christian camp when I felt Him calling me to reach out to the outcasts at my middle school... but this seemed like a strange thing to ask of an introvert who was an outcast herself. During my freshman year of high school, a new exchange student from Thailand joined our marching band. When nobody else seemed to be interested in befriending her, God pointed the finger right at me. At the time, the simple act of introducing myself to a stranger – especially when nobody else was making the effort to do so – was terrifying. But what began as a command from God, turned into a great friendship and the start to what would become my way of living out a life that displays the love of Christ.

The next year brought a new round of exchange students to our school, and soon I was the official welcoming committee. Not only did I befriend these students, but I was able to share the gospel with them. My junior year of high school, my family began hosting exchange students, one of whom had never even heard of Christianity. I wasn't ready to share the gospel with her, but again God commanded me to take a leap forward – and now, three years later, she is attending a local church. This exposure to the international community led to my interest in studying the Russian language, my current major in college. Since then I have volunteered at an English camp in Ukraine, where many Ukrainian students were saved. I travelled all across Eastern Europe during my year of study abroad, during which I was the only Christian in our student group and was able to introduce the gospel to one of my friends.

At each step, at each person, God asked me to step out and do something, or say something that seemed ridiculous or scary at the time. EVERY time, that simple act of faith has led to long-lasting relationships and life-changing chains of events. To me, Christianity is not a faith of "don'ts." It's a faith of "go do."

June 19

Mary Lesslie Culp

Neely's Creek ARP Church

Growing up in church, I was provided with a solid foundation and genuine support for my faith. I enjoyed attending youth group, mission trips, and conferences at Bonclarken. After working as a counselor at Music Conference and Camp Bonclarken, I was interested in Camp Joy. Little did I know that Camp Joy would change my life!

I would like to say that I live out my faith to the fullest every day and that it is easy, but I don't. It's a challenge to actively choose to be engaged and to try to connect with others in this broken world. It's hard to see God's purpose when life is full of heartache, pain, and disappointment, especially when we know that *"God works for the good of those who love him."* (Rom. 8:28)

I experienced my first "Why me, God?" moment my junior year of high school. Within a six-week period, I lost two grandparents, and I was struggling in my honors classes. I was frustrated and hurt. I wasn't mad at God, but it was hard for me to be able to see the bright side of the situation. Why would God take two important people in my life away? Was I being selfish in the sense that I wanted the comfort and validation of my grandparents even though they were in heaven worshipping their Creator?

I found clarity at Camp Joy. My eyes were opened to a brand new type of love and friendship. As a counselor, I thought that I would be helping and teaching my special friend (camper) about the gospel, but in reality, I learned so much more from her! I was inspired by the childlike faith of the campers and the confidence they had in knowing God will listen to them. I admired their positive attitude and unconditional love towards EVERYONE. All of our special friends loved us instantly just as Jesus loves the world. After that week I knew that I wanted to be constantly surrounded by people who loved Jesus (J), loved others (O), and lastly themselves (Y-you). JOY! That's when I knew Special Education was my calling. Now when I am discouraged, I think about my friends at Camp Joy. I remember how they love completely and how they enjoy every day that God has given them. My Camp Joy friends inspire me to put my faith in action.

June 20

Rachel

Fayetteville ARPC

Serving in Southeast Asia with Wycliffe Bible Translators

I felt God calling me to the mission field from the time I was a child, but it took me several years to admit that this is where God was calling me. For me, one of the biggest hurdles to following God's call was the fear of being different. I had never personally known a missionary, so mission work had a sense of "otherness" about it. I was in high school when I finally gave in to the idea that missions was a part of what God had planned for my life, no matter how weird it might seem.

God gave me a passion for foreign languages and cultures, as well as a heart for those in spiritual and physical poverty. It turned out that those passions intersected in the work of Bible translation. Over the past 7 years, God has surprised me first by calling me to Southeast Asia, a region I had never considered serving in prior to contacting Wycliffe. He then led me to a small language community in a remote area of a closed country that I had never given any thought to before coming to Asia.

One of the things God has been teaching me recently is to persevere through the parts of my work that are less exciting. This past year, one of my main goals has been to complete my graduate studies program. This has meant countless hours reading textbooks, editing papers, and trying to jump through academic hurdles. While I would much rather be out on the field, I realize that completing my degree is a necessary step in preparing for ministry. With that in mind, applying myself to my studies becomes an act of worship and an important part of following God's call.

June 21

Ms. Rebekah Harkins

Director of Children's Ministries

Greenville ARPC

As an Erskine student, I had the opportunity to spend time serving widows in the Due West and Honea Path area through the Widow's Watchman Ministry. Bill May, founder of this ministry, is one of the most humble and genuine servants, and he has had a lasting impact on that community. RUF Erskine did a great deal of partnering with Bill May to form an outreach and care for widows in their need for spiritual nourishment through love, the presence of friends, sharing the love of Christ, as well as physical needs like building a ramp for them to get into their house or planting flowers for them. I loved having these ladies in my life and spending time with them is something that I will never forget.

James 1:27 says, *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction..."* Visiting widows through this ministry brought joy and encouragement to all who were involved and the light of Christ shone brightly during those visits. The most important part of the widow's ministry experience to me was the time spent simply sitting with the ladies, asking them questions, listening to their stories, and learning from them. I think that this type of ministry can also be a vital part of a church's care of others because of the inter-generational aspect that gives children and youth and adults an opportunity to learn from and grow in love for each other as the body of Christ.