



THE MISSION IS NOT CANCELLED

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As campuses shut down or go to online classes across the nation how can we leverage this as an opportunity to advance the gospel instead of a momentum killer? Your large group meetings may be canceled but the mission is not canceled. In many places across the world believers cannot meet in large groups due to persecution. Some of these places are where the most dynamic church planting movements are happening! Small groups are where the frontlines of a movement happen. What if your ministry actually gained momentum during this season? As the rest of the world is moving away from community what if our ministries moved deeper into community? There has been a lot of great content and ideas shared about utilizing technology and live streaming which I fully agree with but this article will focus on how we can go beyond that.

As our campus is shut down our students and staff are doing a great job planning unofficial social events to connect the unconnected and are even continuing to set up gospel appointments! In our setting it is still appropriate to get together for in person small groups so we are capitalizing on that to help build momentum. Students are still looking for something to do with their free time! What if a game night at your house was a first step towards them coming to Christ?

Lean into Small Groups

This generation is not starving for content. They are starving for community. If you produce the most killer online worship service that will only scratch the surface of what your students need. Content is everywhere. Students would be helped by your live streamed message but honestly they might be more likely to watch a Francis Chan video. The advantage we have over Francis Chan is we have a relationship with our students. We know them. We care deeply about their needs and we can speak truth into their lives the way Francis Chan can't. Providing opportunities for building community is the need of the hour.

If you can continue to push people towards in person small groups I recommend pushing all your energy towards those and making those epic. If in-person groups are not possible or if most students are out of town then using technology like Zoom or Google+ hangouts can be a great way to continue providing community for your students. The last few summers, our ministry has led online discipleship groups for students. They read a good discipleship book together and discuss it, memorize one verse a week and then keep each other accountable for some basic spiritual disciplines. God uses these groups in tremendous ways every summer as some of our best leaders have come out of these groups. My advice for online discipleship groups is to make sure they are small enough to allow for lots of sharing, accountability and prayer. For example if you had 20 students that want to join one of these groups I would split them into 4-5 groups and break them up by gender. Think discipleship groups over community groups. This may even open up an opportunity for new discipleship group leaders to take a group and run with it. It is helpful to have clear expectations and at home learning assignments so that you know they are getting some great content. Having accountability in this



situation is huge! You don't get what you expect; you get what you inspect. Students need to be pushed especially when they don't have the built in encouragement of being around as many peers who are following Christ.

Let me challenge you not to simply do a live stream of your weekly meeting! It's a good idea but it is not enough. You can continue to provide in depth personal discipleship and accountability for as many students as you ever had and maybe even more! Encourage your students to invite friends. There is no limit to who they can invite now because geography is not an issue. Our online discipleship groups have included students from across the nation who have never come to an in-person gathering of ours.

Go Deeper In Discipleship

In this season it will be wise to focus even more on building deeply into the lives of students that we are currently discipling. If you have students that you are personally discipling then now is the time to turn up the heat on your intentionality! Help them make stretch goals in their spiritual disciplines like praying for an hour a day, memorizing two verses a week or fasting once a week. Give them books to read, memorize some verses together, labor in prayer together over the phone. Challenge them to take an online course like [Perspectives](#) or one of one these courses by [IMB](#) or [Gospel Coalition](#). I remember learning about house church leaders in a persecuted country who came together in caves for a month at a time for training. Part of that training included memorizing the gospel of Mark so that they could use that in their preaching or even to meditate on if they got thrown into prison. Part of the training was how to jump off a two story window without breaking your legs just in case God led them to escape from prison. I am not necessarily recommending that but I believe God wants to use this season in our ministries to help train up hundreds of leaders in a deeper and more intentional way!

Work On The Ministry Not Just In The Ministry

With less day to day ministry events to lead this is the perfect time for us to evaluate everything related to our ministries and to work on making them better. Start working on those discipleship materials you have been meaning to write. Set up that phone call with a coach or mentor that you have been meaning to get time with. Read a few of those books you had on your personal development list.

Some friends of mine and I recently launched [Campus Multiplication Network](#) which provides training and coaching for collegiate ministry leaders. We are creating resources and giving custom coaching. We would love to connect with anyone who wants to sharpen their vision and leadership on campus. Just hit me up at CampusMultiplicationNetwork@gmail.com .

One of the most important things that you can ever do is to dream with your team about the future of your ministry. Don't be afraid to set what Jim Collins calls "Big Hairy Audacious Goals" (BHAG). Once you dream a bit and set some audacious faith goals it is wise to implement some sort of strategic planning process to "reverse engineer" your desired outcomes. After taking significant time to pray, dream, brainstorm and nail



down some faith goals it would be wise to build a practical strategic plan to accomplish those goals. For example maybe your goal is that by this time next year you will reach 40 freshmen and connect them to your ministry. What steps would you need to start taking right now in order to accomplish that goal? This might include fundraising, recruiting, raising up small group leaders, **evangelism training**, learning **best practices for reaching freshman** and tons of prayer.

Make sure to model an attitude of bold faith to your team. If the vision you are pursuing doesn't seem intimidating and impossible then it is not big enough. It is ok if you don't reach every one of your faith goals. Our team falls short of our goals regularly but we have also accomplished things as a team that I am still having a hard time believing God did! Take the risk by declaring as a team how you are trusting God. A wise leader does the work to plan as much in advance so the ministry is set up to maximize its fruitfulness each consecutive year in order to build a movement over time. This free e-book put out by Cru called **Principles God Honors** has some great examples of how to build a movement on campus. Just because your students don't plan what they will be doing the next few hours doesn't mean we should be haphazard in planning how we lead our ministries. The mission God called us to is too urgent for that!

What other ideas do you have about maximizing your time during this season?

Paul Worcester (@PaulWorcester) and his wife Christy lead Christian Challenge at California State University, Chico, where they passionately seek to introduce college students to Jesus and become multiplying disciples. Paul recently founded Campus Multiplication Network (@CampusMNetwork) with the goal of training leaders to multiply ministries and churches around the world. Paul is the author of *Tips for Starting a College Ministry* and the co-author of the new edition of *The Fuel and The Flame* with Steve Shadrach.