

HPU student leads discipleship ministry to athletes

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BROWNWOOD—During his freshman year at Howard Payne University, Xavier McFalls stood before his football teammates and spoke some uncomfortable words.

“I told them I love them, and God loves them,” he said. “It was definitely intimidating. My knees were shaking, but I think it was important for them to hear that.”



At the time, McFalls had not been a Christian long, but he felt God encouraging him to speak out about his newfound faith. Now a senior, he continues to answer the call by leading an athlete discipleship ministry through HPU's Baptist Student Ministry.

McFalls gets to know student-athletes from all sports and helps them get

involved in Bible studies, worship services and other spiritual events on campus. He also leads devotionals and helps disciple younger players to become spiritual leaders on their teams.

“I help them learn how to play as Christian athletes and how to ask themselves if they’re glorifying God through their actions,” he said.

McFalls values discipleship, and he spent a lot of time around godly mentors in Amarillo, his hometown. They helped him see the importance of surrounding himself with good Christian influences.

“I wanted to know more and more about God, and I wanted to go to a Christian university,” he said.

He learned about HPU through recruiting letters from the football program and scheduled a campus visit.

HPU ‘felt like home’

“It felt like home,” he said. “I knew that I belonged here.”

He entered the university in the fall of 2012 as an exercise and sport science major. That semester, through the encouragement of Christian influences at HPU, he made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ during Encounter Week, the university’s fall revival.

He sought new ways to grow in his service to Christ. He became involved with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and works as an intern with the college ministry at Brownwood’s Coggin Avenue Baptist Church. He also regularly hosts a Bible study in his apartment on campus.

McFalls has participated in several mission trips during his time at HPU. The past two years during spring break, he traveled with an HPU team to take part in the annual Beach Reach ministry at South Padre Island. He also participated in two mission trips through Texas Baptists’ Go Now

Missions and recently traveled to Alaska for a mission experience with his church.

Keith Platte, director of the university's BSM, has known McFalls two years.

Willing attitude

"Xavier is one of the leading examples on campus of how to be a follower of Jesus," Platte said. "He has a fervor for service, a burden for those who do not have faith in Jesus Christ and a willing attitude."

Although the idea of being so outspoken among his peers originally was daunting, McFalls said, he's had a good response.

"They respect me, because I understand them," he said. "I spend time with them, live life with them and love them where they are in their lives."

Platte sees McFalls as a good example to other believers because of his authenticity and faithfulness.

"When he is asked to share his faith, he makes no excuses," Platte said. "He does it because he sees the need and because God calls him to obedience."