

UTA intern knows BSM's impact from personal experience

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As a student at the University of Texas at Arlington, Joseph Ruiz came to faith in Christ through the influence of Baptist Student Ministry. Now, he serves as campus missionary intern to give other students the same opportunity.



The Baptist Student Ministry at the University of Texas at Arlington.

After graduating from UTA last December, Ruiz felt compelled to continue ministry at UTA. As a campus missionary intern, he manages several Bible studies, outreach efforts, partnerships with local churches, small groups and evangelism training events.

Ruiz grew up in a home where his parents never attended church. Instead, he attended services with either his grandparents or his uncle, but they had limited impact on him.

“Being in San Antonio, the services were in Spanish” he said. “I never learned Spanish, so I would just go to these church services and not get anything out of them.”

Even without any understanding of the language, the importance of church

was not lost on him.

“I just kept going for some reason, and I think that just seeing a bunch of people meeting consistently every week meant that it was important” Ruiz said.

Eventually, Ruiz came to believe in God, but had no true idea of what being a Christian looked like.

“I thought that going to church and sitting there made me a Christian. ... So, I just lived my life like that” he said.

Without a true understanding of what a faith commitment to Christ meant, Ruiz said he fell into “some sinful things” during high school.

“I just didn’t have that relationship with God,” he said.

Growing passion for Christ and ministry

Despite the setbacks of his childhood and high school years, Ruiz was accepted at UTA and soon became involved with the Baptist Student Ministry on campus as a freshman.

At the BSM, Ruiz learned what true Christianity looks like, and he committed his life to Christ on Feb. 15, 2019. As an undergraduate, his faith grew, and he developed a passion for Christ and ministry.

Ruiz know both from his own life and working with others the “very positive impact” BSM has on students. He recalled asking students what they are able to do now because of BSM.

With answers such as “because of the BSM I was able to hear about Jesus” or “hear the gospel” or “be saved” or “grow in my relationship with God,”

Ruiz's question showed the extent to which BSM has an impact on students' walk with Christ.

Making an impact

BSM Director Gary Stidham reported 50 students have professed faith in Christ this year at the UTA BSM. He said he has seen students "called to ministry, become mature Christian leaders, and be prepared for a lifetime of service in the church."

Ruiz expressed gratitude for the impact BSM has had on his life and on his spiritual growth.

"The BSM is really awesome and helpful for students that are seeking God" Ruiz said. BSM provides "a ton of resources" to anyone seeking to learn, develop, or grow in their faith as a college student, he noted.

Ruiz—whom Stidham refers to as a "blessing"—has had a remarkable impact at UTA, leading several students to Christ, first as a student himself and now as an intern.

He is "growing into a strong missionary and will do effective Great Commission ministry from now on," Stidham said.

Stidham pointed to his work in outreach, the Bible studies he teaches, and the evangelism training he leads. Ruiz manages many of the evangelism initiatives on the UTA campus, including pairing student leaders and sending them out to share the gospel.

These evangelism efforts "teach the students different ways to be able to share their faith, to articulate it, and to leave UTA as lifelong followers of Jesus" Ruiz said.

Sharing the good news of Christ is "what we're called to do" he added.

“That’s what Jesus said, right before he ascended back into heaven.”