

Cody Shouse: Discipling students to disciple students one at a time

July 16, 2019

Cody Shouse has been the director of the [Longhorn BSM](#)—Baptist Student Ministry—at the University of Texas in Austin since 2010. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on collegiate ministry. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated minister to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where else have you served in ministry, and what were your positions there?

- BSM director at Navarro College in Corsicana
- Student pastor, Cornerstone Baptist Church, Corsicana
- Baptist Collegiate Ministry intern, University of Louisiana at Monroe

Where did you grow up?

Duncanville, Texas

How did you come to faith in Christ?

My dad came to Christ shortly after a major life crisis. His coming to faith led to many in our family coming to faith, myself included. I was 7 years old when I trusted Jesus as my Savior.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

- Bachelor in Business Information Systems from the University of Louisiana at Monroe
- Master of Arts in Christian Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

About ministry

Why do you feel called into campus ministry?

My third year of college, I was playing football and studying to be a teacher and coach at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. At a Fellowship of Christian Athletes retreat, God completely shifted my heart from loving sports and competition simply to wanting others to know and serve Jesus.

What is your favorite aspect of campus ministry? Why?

The students. Students are the present and future of the church. I get to see them lead in marvelous ways as they engage their neighbors and their generation around the world. The best part is knowing they are bringing others along with them as they go.

What one aspect of your ministry gives you the greatest joy?

Watching a student walk away from the god of self and trusting Jesus and watching another student lead them in this process is a given for us, but there are so many things.

Right now, one of my favorite things is to watch students grow beyond our ministry and their college years, not simply in their careers, but in their faith: watching them find a local church in the first few months of their

career; watching them either move in to discipling relationships in the church or create some the church never had; watching them be ordained as deacons or to other leadership roles; watching them be part of a church plant or even plant their lives among an unreached people group around the world.

What would you like more people to know about campus ministry?

How vital it is. The University of Texas is less than 10 percent Christian, meaning there are over 45,000 students walking around this campus every day without knowing the hope or joy of Jesus' salvation.

The BSM is positioned in a way so many churches just could not be. Our culture has established an "us and them" mentality in regards to spiritual things. This has caused not just a tension between the church and those who are not Christian but an actual chasm. The BSM is allowed to position itself in a way that more of those who are not Christian are engaged and listened to in regards to spiritual issues.

What priorities or goals guide your ministry?

We say the Longhorn BSM does two things: discipleship and missions. As we engage a student in discipleship, it will lead them naturally to mission, and if we engage a student in mission, it should lead them naturally to deeper discipleship. It is a beautiful relationship between the two modeled by Jesus.

What is the most exciting or joyful thing that has happened in your ministry?

A young man named Victor came to faith after a couple of BSM students living in the freshman dorm shared their lives and the gospel with him. He later led that same dorm community after deciding to stay there all four

years of his college career. Victor was able to share the gospel countless times over the three years he lived there. Victor then came on staff as an intern where he started a new work among Latino students, which now has a dozen students involved reaching over 30 Latino students who are not followers of Jesus.

This is our full process: Engaged with the gospel > Trust Jesus > Discipled > Engage in mission > Teach others.

What is the most heartbreaking thing that has happened in your ministry?

Watching a student admit his or her need for Jesus but walking away because either the cost is too high or the student just is not willing to trust something other than himself or herself.

Based upon what you have observed from campus ministry, what do you think about the future of our country and/or world?

I believe the future of our country will continue to ostracize Christians and only give attention to radicals. This is the trajectory we have been on for the last decade, and I do not see leaders who are willing to change that trajectory. This means those who claim to be Christian will come under greater scrutiny from those around them. Things like hypocrisy and judgment will be hyper-identified and cause disqualification in a community.

I believe students already are seeing this on campuses. To be a Christian college student in the current culture is a choice made on purpose and with deep intention.

Based upon what you have observed from campus ministry, what do you think about the future of the church?

I believe the future of the church is shifting right in front of us. Watching campus ministry every day shows me future leaders of the church will need to be more willing to hand ministry over to the people of God.

The metrics will need to be different. Simply counting how many people show up to events or gatherings will need to shift to how many are being engaged through relationships in the workplace or neighborhoods.

The church will need to measure impact far differently and, in turn, learn how to celebrate differently in the near future if the church wants to see kingdom growth through this generation.

How has your ministry or your perspective on ministry changed?

Fifteen years ago, I was convinced that if we could fill a room with students, teach them and share the gospel with them, we would see revival. I have shifted my perspective to more of a “one at a time” mentality that happens through relationship.

I also used to see information as the greatest apologetic we have as Christians. I have learned that relationship and presence are the greatest apologetic we have and something Christ used consistently.

The more we make our entire lives available to our neighbors, the more we will show them Christ incarnate.

If you could launch any new ministry, what would it

be? Why?

Some type of training residency for the Christian to engage his or her professional environments.

Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing your ministry.

The declining public view of Christianity. This is the result of many things, but the continued over-politicization of our faith is one of many reasons.

I also find to be devastating an unwillingness among Christians simply to listen to those who view the world differently.

Lastly, I think continuing to put our identity in what we do instead of who we are is killing the character and morals of our young leaders and students.

What key opportunities will campus ministry undertake in the next 10 years?

I think the nations will continue to come to American universities. The University of Texas has over 6,000 international students attending from over 120 countries. Continuing to have the resources, people and time to engage these students is vital.

I feel as though we will find it only more difficult over the next decade to gain access to many countries; so, the university campus soon may be the only place to engage citizens of certain countries.

What key issues face college or university campuses today?

There seems to be a great divide in how to reach university students. There are some who say "by any means possible," while others are saying "only

through the local church.” I wish the local church would begin to push deeper into the campuses around the corner and down the street from them.

There are not enough workers on any campus; so, please send more. In my city, there are churches that say, “We will let such-and-such church or group reach college students.” The problem with this is that church or group cannot reach every nook and cranny of the campus.

Come alongside that church or group, find the unreached places and plant yourselves there.

About Cody

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

- My dad showed me how to live with incredible character and with great grace.
- David Uth, now at the First Baptist Church of Orlando, showed me relationships are the most important part of the body of Christ.
- Mark Robinson and Max Barnett showed me how to reach the college campus through relational discipleship and evangelism.
- Rick Spencer and Bruce McGowan showed me how to bring others into your vision to make a greater impact than you can do alone.

What is the impact of your ministry on your family?

It had a high potential to be a massive negative impact. I am gone a lot of evenings to be on campus, but our small children—who are 9, 5 and 4 years old—actually pray for me on the nights I am on campus. They pray for me as I tell students about Jesus. This has made them love our ministry and even have some ownership around the Longhorn BSM and look up to BSM

students.

Name some of your favorite non-biblical books or authors and explain why.

- *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* by Eugene Peterson is the epitome of the Christian character.
- *With* by Skye Jethani has simplified my daily walk and relationship with Jesus.
- *Abba, Father* by Brennan Manning has helped me understand who I am and how God sees me.
- *Valley of Vision* is a book of prayers I find myself reading continually to stay grateful to God and his sovereignty.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

The whole book of Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews tackles Jesus and his gospel flawlessly.

If you could get one “do over” in ministry, what would it be, and why?

I would take a different route home on [Apr. 5, 2018](#).

What does the BSM need from the local church more than anything right now?

We need the church to believe in us. There are many who do believe in us—for a laundry list of reasons—but there are many who do not. There are many local churches who believe we are an unbiblical entity at worst.

I wish more churches saw us as their missionaries instead of their competition. I wish more churches saw Baptist Student Ministry as the next step for their graduating students.

We want our campuses to hear the gospel of Jesus and know him deeply, and we know we need the local church for that to happen most wholly. The local church believing in us as BSM leaders means it believes we are a long play for the church in regards to evangelism, discipleship and church involvement.