

# **'Take responsibility for the Great Commission': USM BSU faithful to share Gospel on campus**

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Scripture reveals time and time again how God uses ordinary servants to make a mighty impact for His Kingdom. Through the faithful efforts of college students at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM), many have given their lives to Christ. How is God using USM students to reach their peers?

Across the state, Baptist Student Unions (BSUs) have opened wide their doors to welcome students for another school year. The beginning of the year has proved to be a crucial time to reach new students with the Gospel. USM's BSU spent a portion of the previous spring semester training students in evangelism and discipleship. When the fall semester began, student leaders were immediately prepared to share the gospel when the opportunities presented themselves.



USM BSU students (Photo credit: USM BSU)

“I’ve done fall outreach team for two years,” said Ethan Cook, USM’s BSU president

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Though in the heart of the Bible belt, cultural Christianity has spread like wildfire in Mississippi. Church attendance and Gospel knowledge decline more and more, and USM’s student body has not evaded this epidemic. However, the BSU has found that students are still willing to talk about spiritual matters. In fact, most students respond positively to spiritual questions when prompted.

“People are willing to discuss spiritual things,” commented Kris Walters, BSU Director at USM. “They are more open than you would think. When you ask people what their spiritual beliefs are, a lot of people are interested in talking about that. We live in the south, and we have the notion of culture Christianity. ‘I grew up christian’ or ‘I grew up going to church.’ They have that little familiarity with it, but as far as making Jesus Lord of their life, we find *that’s* the challenge for our campus. We talk with our students about how Jesus is Savior and Lord. He is two sides of one coin. Sometimes, we want him to be Savior, and we don’t want him to be Lord because that’s too close. That interferes with my fun and with me calling the shots.”

Walters quoted Matthew’s gospel when describing the setting of campus. “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few’” (Matthew 9:37, ESV). But it only takes a few faithful laborers to make an impact and

students are realizing the simple task before them.

“We want to teach our students the simplicity of what we are asking of them. If you can make small talk and read, you can lead someone to Christ. Our prayer for our students is for them to have a burden for the lost around them. The momentum has grown. They are picking it up, and they are making it happen. I think that’s them realizing they can do this... That’s really the mindset. ‘The great commission is my responsibility.’ It’s everyone’s responsibility. We need to take responsibility for the Great Commission,” said Walters.

“We realize as a BSU culture that it’s not our work to



USM BSU students (Photo credit: USM BSU)

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Because of the simple obedience to the Great Commision, this campus ministry has been a channel to win at least six individuals to Christ since the first week of classes. Students have participated in what Cook and Walters referred to as "two-by-two" and "Gospel appointments."

Two-by-twos seek to engage the campus to find individuals whose hearts are softening to the Gospel or to plant a seed in someone's heart. On the other hand, Gospel appointments are longer and deeper conversations with the goal of hearing someone's story and sharing the Gospel with him/her. These appointments are where connections are built.

"It's much more effective to have a one-on-one relationship and to be friends with people God has put you with. There are different pockets on campus that God has put you in. Every student is put in a different place. It's been more effective for students to look around where they are and to see the people God has put in their life," said Walters.

As students intentionally look at the people God has placed in their lives, God has revealed himself and his heart for the lost.

"I've learned about God's heart and desire for the lost to come to him," said Cook. "At the start of the semester, I asked the Lord to give me his eyes for the lost. He's faithful to answer that prayer. Walking across our college campus and looking into the faces of the people you pass. God created them, and he desires for each and every one of them to know Him. That [can be] overwhelming. I think about how many people are on our college campus and how are we going to reach these people? But in the same sense, it's encouraging."

"Looking across the campus and having a burden that everyone deserves a chance to hear the good news," Walters said. "Everyone deserves an opportunity to respond to it. Everyone deserves an opportunity to hear if they are willing."