

THE JESUS CLIMB — RESTORING STUDENT'S HOPE IN THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

FORUM PRESENTER: GARY DAVID STRATTON

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OVERVIEW: Today's students present biblical higher learning communities with unprecedented challenges—hopelessness, depression, anxiety, social media addiction, relational isolation, biblical illiteracy, etc. Yet the greatest crisis facing biblical higher education today might be our students' crisis of confidence in the power of the gospel to transform their lives and their world.

This forum is designed for faculty, academic leaders, student life professionals, and campus ministers determined to meet this crisis by re-examining our incomplete understanding of Jesus's teaching on discipleship. Then, we will use this new perspective to re-envision our students, re-chart their pathway to spiritual maturity, and refocus our institutional efforts to reinforce this pathway.

7:00 – 8:00 Forum Breakfast — Regency Foyer
8:00 – 8:15 Welcome & Introductions

8:15 – 9:30 SESSION ONE — RE-EXAMINING THE MEANING OF DISCIPLESHIP IN JESUS' DAY AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE STRUGGLES FACING BIBLICAL HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY

OVERVIEW: Let's examine together how growing up in an era marked by the church's ineffective and often un-Christlike reliance upon the power of programming, celebrity, and politics has resulted in a generation of students who have lost hope in God's power to transform individuals and society. As predicted by hope theory, they no longer seek transformation nor seek to transform their world because they no longer believe such transformation is possible. Yet, Jesus taught his first students that transformation into the kind of people who can join him in his mission to set this broken world right is the pinnacle of genuine discipleship. Consider . . .

- ▶ The meaning of the 286 NT uses of the word "disciple" vs. the three uses of "Christian."
- ▶ The cost of discipleship as synonymous with the Christian life vs. a second step
- ▶ Jesus's upward call to become the kind of person who loves God and neighbor as the secret to transforming the kingdoms of this world

9:30 – 10:15 Refreshment Break — Regency Foyer

10:15 – 11:45 SESSION 2 — RE-ENVISIONING JESUS' CALL UPON OUR STUDENTS AND OUR COLLEGE — TEACHING EVERYTHING JESUS LIVED BY LIVING EVERYTHING JESUS TAUGHT

OVERVIEW: Jesus chose to establish a Jewish rabbinical college *before* he founded his church. This often-overlooked fact is foundational to understanding the mission of all truly *Biblical* higher education. Consider . . .

- ▶ How Jesus' ministry as a Jewish rabbinic college is analogous to biblical higher education today
- ▶ Two primary texts comprised the curriculum of these rabbinical colleges
- ▶ The importance of Jesus's students following him first and foremost as their teacher
- ▶ How we can re-envision our students not with a watered-down gospel but with the cost of discipleship

12:00 – 1:00 Buffet Lunch — Regency Foyer

1:00 – 2:15 SESSION 3 — RE-CHARTING OUR STUDENTS' PATHWAY TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY — THE UPWARD/DOWNWARD JOURNEY

OVERVIEW: This session presents a discipleship of hope paradigm described in Gary David Stratton's book *The Jesus Climb: Journeying from Student to Disciple*. Healthy faith is impossible without our helping students develop a "hope that does not disappoint" formed through the interplay of their "upward" climb through suffering and surrender and their "downward" journey of experiencing "God's love poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:3-5). Let's explore the disciple's . . .

- ▶ *Ascent* of a higher commitment to loving God and neighbor with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength
- ▶ *Descent* into a deeper experience of the intimate, transforming, and other-centered love of God
- ▶ Belief in and knowledge of Jesus as their Teacher, Messiah, Son of God, and Redeemer of the world

2:15 – 3:00 Refreshment Break — Regency Foyer

3:00 – 4:15 SESSION 4 — REFOCUSING OUR SCHOOL'S DISCIPLESHIP EFFORTS – IN ACADEMICS, STUDENT LIFE, MENTORING, SERVICE LEARNING, ETC.

OVERVIEW: Explore lessons learned (and failed) in Johnson University's multifaceted pursuit of becoming a "Great Commission University" capable of graduating disciples who have become the kind of people who teach everything Jesus lived and live everything Jesus taught. Consider a refocusing discipleship in . . .

- ▶ The Classroom
- ▶ Student life
- ▶ Athletics
- ▶ Service-learning
- ▶ Chapel

4:15 – 4:30 Wrap Up
6:00 – 8:30 CONNECTIONS DINNER — Ballroom B/C/D