



NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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Grace to Lead a Bible Study



Sophia's Bible study. Sophia is middle in the first row.

When my campus minister suggested I lead a Bible study, I immediately panicked inside. “What do I know about the Bible? What if I can’t answer all the questions people ask? How do I make passages relatable to girls who are all going through different things?” But just as those questions filled my head, the Holy Spirit opened my mouth and formed the words, “I’ll do it.”

God has a plan. Every Tuesday night I’ve had a front row seat and have watched it unfold. Our weekly all-women’s Bible study challenged me to prepare, listen, and dwell, more than ever before, on each word we read as we worked our way through the Psalms. With every diverse group comes diverse opinions, some stronger than others. I have had to learn how to foster a safe environment and facilitate disagreements so everyone feels respected as they voice their opinion/view. Reading through the Psalms has revealed just how relatable the Bible continues to be in the twenty-first century. It’s been an honor to watch girls’ eyes light up as they hear “mhm” from others around them while they connect to David’s struggles and share a vulnerable story. We have girls who are non-believers, new believers and lifelong believers all come together and notice they’re not alone in their journey to know Christ.

God’s love *really* does go from north to south, east to west. When people are lost and walking around with fainted souls, God doesn’t give them a new pair of skis to go have fun on – He gives them a community (cf. Psalm

107:1-9). I listened as girls would share the comfort they now feel after finding a Christian community in the “least religious state in the U.S.” [Vermont]

God’s grace never runs dry. Leading a Bible study has challenged me to listen more, talk less, reach out to people who I feel I have nothing in common with, or strike up a conversation with someone who has hurt me. Every time I felt as if I had strayed from that standard, God had grace. I have learned that being a Christian isn’t easy but finding a community to share that hardship with makes all the difference. I have found that community in RUF and feel strengthened by the women in our Tuesday night Bible study to pursue God’s plan.

– by *Sophia Michalopoulos*

Bible Study Stories

The Bible occupies a central place in RUF, and small group Bible studies are vital opportunities for students to process what the Bible says. Bible studies nurture believers, stimulate faith in unbelievers, and develop leadership gifts in students. Here is a sample of how God is using Bible studies among RUF in the Northeast.



Bible study at Millersville University

Pursuing the Good Life at Harvard

What would make for a successful Bible study with a mix of a couple of Christians, a few non-Christians, and a few who aren’t sure what they are? Ecclesiastes, of course! One of our students began a study with his crew team last year. They went through the Gospel of Mark then, laying a

solid foundation of the good news at the heart of the faith. But as this year began, they came back to the profound questions of what makes for a good life. So, with a little thought and prayer, they decided on the book of Ecclesiastes. Throughout this fall they have been considering this profound book, leading to deeper conversations among themselves and with our Campus Minister! Pray for the goodness of the gospel to sink in! *Jeremy Mullen, Campus Minister at Harvard University*

Weird Guys at IUP

Bible studies are increasingly an oddity in universities. One of the RUF Bible studies at IUP meets in the lobby of one of IUP’s dorms. One week a student passed by our study and interrupted by exclaiming, “What are you guys doing?” I responded, “We are reading the Bible together and discussing it.” With considerable incredulity she asked, “Is this for a class? Are you doing some kind of project?” I responded, “Nope, we are just curious to find out more about who Jesus is and what it means to follow him. You are welcome to join us!” Her last response was simply, “You guys are weird,” and walked off.



Oliver with his “weird” Bible study

From a secular point of view it is incredibly weird for a group of students to study the Bible for an hour every week. Even the students in the study themselves recognize there is something unusual about what we are doing. One student told me in passing as we were walking back from playing basketball, “I never imagined myself being in a Bible study in college.” I’m continually amazed and encouraged that students like him keep coming to this study and actively participating, many of whom are studying the Bible for the first time. Praise God for the work he is doing in revealing himself to students in these “strange” Bible studies. *Oliver Pierce, Campus Minister at Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

First-ever Bible Study at UConn

This semester in our Monday night guys’ Bible study we’ve had the unique experience of having a transgender

student join the group. Tom* showed up at our third Bible study of the semester after having attended a large group gathering the previous week. At the end of the Bible study, I said, “it was great to have you with us this week!” He beamed. “This is my first-ever Bible study!” He has faithfully attended our large group and small group all semester since then and is reading the Bible voraciously. He has good insights into the text and seems to enjoy our community. Join me in praying that the word would bear fruit in Tom’s life as he explores Christianity for the first time. *Lucas Dourado, Campus Minister at the University of Connecticut* *Name changed for privacy



Bible study at MIT

Growth in hunger for the Bible at Lehigh

Though there are a number of students that have matured in their walk with the Lord this semester, I think Albert’s story is the best example. Albert is a mechanical engineering student from Hawaii. When we first met, I was uncertain whether or not he was a Christian. He came from a church background but was unsure about his faith in Christ. Soft-spoken and reserved, Albert was on the fringe as a sophomore, but God has worked mightily in his life! He got more involved as a junior, and in his senior year is currently a driving force on campus. Albert leads our freshman Bible study, is on the leadership team, and is RUF’s treasurer.

In just a few semesters, I have seen Albert move from apathetic to connected. He has demonstrated growth in his understanding of grace and a hunger for the Bible. In his words, “I didn’t take the scriptures seriously until I became a Bible study leader.” But his growth is especially evident in his concern for the spiritual condition of others as he connects with and befriends the freshman guys! It has been a delight to see how these young men look up to him.

When Albert and I first decided to meet regularly, I had no idea God would work in his life in such a powerful way. Albert’s story is an ever present reminder that the LORD uses the most unlikely people to accomplish the advancement of his kingdom. *Michael Goodlin, Campus Minister at Lehigh University*

Students Learning to Lead Bible studies at UMD

On Monday and Tuesday evening we have student-led small group Bible studies in two of the dorms (one on north and one on south). We are studying the Sermon on the Mount and asking: What does it mean to be citizens of the Kingdom of God in a fallen world? We also provide pizza or sandwiches which has helped the busy STEM students be consistent. After ten minutes of eating and conversing about their week the students dive into the Bible. Please pray for Rachel, Edward, Amaris and Elia as they study and lead. Amaris recently shared how much she has grown in God's word as she has studied the passage and sought to lead. This is the first time she has led a group and she is flourishing as a student leader. Since we have student leaders in place here, I've been able to help start a Bible study with some students in one of the fraternity houses on campus (FIGI). Please pray that these three students would grow in their knowledge of Jesus and His gospel as we go through John's Gospel. *Chris Garratt, Campus Minister at the University of Maryland*



Student-led Bible study at the University of Maryland



Bible study at Boston University

Discovering Beauty and Truth in the Bible

The transition from freshman to sophomore year is often difficult for college students. In a campus ministry context, these students go from being the focus of our outreach to being leaders in the group. This year, we have a large number of sophomore women on leadership who have been doing an amazing job of pouring into our first years, but who are still learning their place in RUF as well as the

university at large. A few months ago, I decided to start a small group specifically for these girls to have a place to come each week, to get away from campus, build community within their grade, pray for each other, and grow in grace together. This fall, Annie Park and I are leading the group through a study of the *Jesus Storybook Bible*. It has been so amazing to watch these Ivy League students discover the beauty and truth within this children's Bible. I am so encouraged by the conversations this has opened and the discussions it has led to. God is at work in our Tuesday night studies! *Lissy Sommerville, Campus Intern at Brown University/Rhode Island School of Design*



Lissy and Annie with the Brown/RISD Women's Bible study

Stay Connected to RUF!

Thank you for your interest and support of RUF in the Northeast! Campus Ministers plant, student leaders water, God gives the increase, and you supply the prayers and funding that make this ministry thrive.

As you make your year-end donations, please give an extra gift to your favorite RUF Campus Minister or Area Coordinator. You can make donations to our ministry here: <https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. → Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.



There are more stories of God's work on our website. You should check it out! Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this QR code →



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Advent Reflections

How shall I meet my Savior?
 How shall I welcome Thee?
 What manner of behavior
 Is now required of me?
 I wait of Thy salvation;
 Grant me Thy Spirit's light;
 Thus will my preparation
 Be pleasing in Thy sight.

Love caused Thine incarnation;
 Love brought Thee down to me;
 Thy thirst for my salvation
 Procured my liberty;
 O love beyond all telling,
 That led Thee to embrace,
 In love all love excelling,
 Our lost and fallen race.

Rejoice, then, ye sad-hearted,
 Who sit in deepest gloom,
 Who mourn o'er joys departed,
 And tremble at your doom;
 He Who alone can cheer you
 Is standing at the door;
 He brings His pity near you
 And bids you weep no more.
 – Paul Gerhardt, 1653



Advent is the season of waiting and preparation, in which we remember the long centuries during which God was preparing the world to receive His only Son to save us from our sins. Christians use the Advent season to prepare for the Christmas Feast, and to prepare for Christ's second coming in judgment.

Paul Gerhardt captures the spirit of Advent with his question, "How shall I meet my Savior?" At the department store doing my Christmas shopping? In the kitchen baking Christmas cookies? In the choir loft singing the Messiah? In the confessional booth weeping over my sin? There is a place for each of these activities, but Gerhardt states our chief preparation in line five: "I wait of thy salvation." This is reminiscent of a verse from Luther's great hymn:

What though I wait the livelong night,
 and till the dawn appeareth,
 My heart still trusteth in his might;
 it doubteth not nor feareth:
 Do thus, O ye of Israel's seed,
 ye of the Spirit born indeed;
 And wait till God appeareth.

For we cannot prepare ourselves. As Isaiah said, all our righteousness is as filthy rags. The best we can do to prepare to meet God is woefully inadequate. Our only hope is that God will be merciful to us sinners and come to save us, unprepared as we are. Until then we must wait until He appears. But as we have said before, Christian waiting is not inactivity. It is patiently doing all that Christ commands in the confidence that He is with us, He is using us, and He will return for us. Even when all appears lost, we have this hope, and we wait for Christ to save us.

The Christmas Feast is a celebration that the hope of godly men and women was not in vain. Now we live in that same hope that Christ will return to consummate our salvation. May God grant you the grace to wait for Christ as you bear life's burdens, and as we anticipate the Christmas Feast – this month and in eternity.

David Green