



NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

Volume 9, Number 2

December, 2016

Embraced by a Bible Study



Freshman year was a time filled with equal parts confusion and growth. I entered college with a vague idea of who God was, having grown up going to church but never having pursued a relationship with Him. One day while walking back to my dorm, the sight of free pizza caused me to stop by an RUF event. At that moment I had stumbled into a community where, over time, I came to know

and love the Lord. My experience with Bible studies through RUF, particularly during my first year of school, greatly impacted my life and faith.

The idea of a small group Bible study was initially unappealing to me. I didn't feel that my limited knowledge of the Bible was small group worthy, feeling overwhelmed by how much I didn't know. What if I show up at Bible study and I'm asked to turn to a certain book of the Bible and it takes me five minutes to get there because I have no idea where it is, or what if I just can't find it, and everyone is waiting on me and my cover is blown and I just have to leave and never come back? Or what if I'm asked to read and I can't pronounce a word that everyone else has been casually using in conversation for as long as they can remember and OH MY GOODNESS!

All of this rambling to say that despite these insecurities, the Lord was kind to allow me to be so lonely and desperate for community that I showed up to the RUF freshmen girls Bible study almost every Tuesday night my first semester at Pitt. Every week about two to three freshmen would show up and we had two leaders. The Lord was kind yet again, providing leaders who were intentional about getting to know us. I felt deeply cared for through that Bible study, which was influential in my understanding of God's love. While I often didn't say much during the study, I eventually became comfortable enough to begin asking and answering questions, at times even sharing personal doubts. My experience with this small group

allowed me to see the benefits of studying God's word with other people, who offer different insights and perspectives from their own experiences. I also began to realize that not only was the Bible not beyond my understanding, but it's extremely applicable to my life. It was an important introduction to what fellowship should look like, as we shared what had been going on during our weeks and prayed for one another.

Fast forward three years and I'm now a senior. This past semester I have been co-leading a Bible study for some of the coolest sophomores on the planet. Every other week when I lead, the Lord meets me in my insecurities and varying weaknesses and I am able to see Him at work. This experience has left me feeling greatly encouraged, consistently encountering His goodness and eagerness to provide.

— by Julie Rankin

Finding Friends in a Bible Study

University of Delaware

One night in November our Tuesday Bible study met to discuss Jesus' prayer in John 17. After a difficult and contentious election season, one thing that really stuck out to students was Jesus' desire that his people would be one, perfectly united because of God's love for us and our love for God. Our students have really been great at bringing new people and non-Christians to studies this semester. One of our core RUF members, Collin, brought his roommate Armen. To my knowledge Armen is not a Christian, yet during the discussion he was really tracking with Jesus' prayer. He said something like, "We're meant to be unified because we're all about one thing, and knowing God through his word is what can really bring us all together." That same night, many RUF regulars were present, but so was Matt, a frat brother of Dave (regular at RUF who became a Christian about 18 months ago). Kate was there, too, one of our ROTC students who started coming to RUF because of Will (ROTC and member of RUF's ministry team). And this is just a snapshot of the ways God is working in people through his word in our small group Bible studies. *Nick Owens, Campus Minister at University of Delaware*

Brown University/Rhode Island School of Design

Sunday night 11/20, Brown upperclass men's Bible Study. We were discussing Romans 6 and what does it mean exactly to be a slave to righteousness versus a slave to sin? We determined it wasn't about abject servitude in any

base or demeaning sense. God is not a tyrant; rather Paul was using the language of slavery only to point to the necessity of a believer's total devotion to the things of God. Never mind the past, but what do we think tonight? What are we prepared to do? Can Christians conquer sin? Yes! Of course, any and all victory is completely of God's grace through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, and only by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. But yes! A Christian can vanquish sin. Thanks be to God! *Eddie Park, Campus Minister at Brown University/Rhode Island School of Design*



Brown/RISD Bible study

Millersville University

The biggest evidence of God's work at Millersville is our Bible studies. Each year since we arrived on campus we have added a new one. Until this fall I have led all the Bible studies, but this fall the Lord provided four student Bible study leaders – and that has transformed the landscape for how ministry is done at Millersville. These four students have allowed the ministry to grow. They have been a point of contact for new students to get connected to RUF. They are able to reach students that a campus minister would not/could not. They have faithfully led Bible studies and met with students in their group. They have listened to people with broken hearts and loved people looking to connect. These students are actively discipling other students at Millersville University and shaping the way ministry will be done on campus for years to come. *Trip Beans, Campus Minister at Millersville University*

Penn State University

I was talking with a small group leader when he told me some encouraging news. His small group is going through Ephesians, and he was excited about the conversations his small group had been having. He was excited about one person in particular. While going through Ephesians 2, a light seemed to turn on for one of the small group members. My leader explained, with a smile on his face, that this member was verbalizing that the gospel was the great equalizer. If we have no reason to boast before God, then we have no reason to boast before each other either. He seemed to be witnessing a paradigm shift. The reason that I love our small groups is because our leaders are

gaining valuable ministry experience. Praise God! *Joe Dentici, Campus Minister at Penn State University*



Penn State Bible Study

University of Maryland

Each Thursday we host a free lunch Bible study in the student union in a private room. This semester we have been studying Paul's letter to the Philippians and the themes of lasting joy and contentment in circumstances that come through union with Christ in the Gospel. Each week 12-15 students enjoy the food, fellowship and interaction in the Scripture. One of the highlights for me has been the consistent attendance of a Chinese grad student who had never read the Bible until this semester (first year in the U.S.). She comes to this study faithfully as well as a Friday morning theology reading group, reading classic reformed theologians (Luther, Calvin, Murray, etc.). Everything has been new to her, but her consistent attendance and reading says to me that God is drawing her to himself. I am encouraged to know that the Lord's Word is sharper than a two-edged sword and that "it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose..." Is. 55:11. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*



University of Maryland Pizza Bible study

University of Vermont

Psalms 73 is a rap song. Let me explain...

This semester in Bible study we've been asking the question, "Who is God?" That question – and our search for answers – has taken us on a journey through the Old Testament and New. Last week we found ourselves in the psalter.

One of my favorite questions to ask students when studying the psalms is, "If you heard this song on the radio, what would it sound like?" After kicking around some ideas, the students agreed – "Psalm 73 is a rap song."

"It's written by a guy named Asaph," said one of them. "That even sounds like a rapper's name! Just write it A\$APH." I laughed.

I pointed out that Asaph was writing at a time of real political and cultural upheaval and that a lot of his songs deal with many of the same issues hip-hop artists rap about today. In an article on the relationship between hip-hop and politics, David Love writes that hip-hop has long been "a medium to express the hopes and frustrations of a disenfranchised community. Hip-hop speaks up for the underdog." It draws on current events and inserts political commentary. It speaks truth to power. Hip-hop does all of the above. Psalm 73 does, too.

"Who is God in this psalm?" I ask the students. He is present. He is powerful. But my favorite answer that day: "He is Asaph's friend." Indeed he is. He is ours, too. *John Meinen, Campus Minister at University of Vermont*

Read John's full story here: <http://www.rufnortheast.org/>.

Your Connection to RUF

In RUF Bible studies lonely students like Julie are making friends and RUF students like Collin are bringing their friends. But most important, everyone is learning who Jesus is.

Did you notice how many of these stories featured students leading Bible studies? As Trip Beans pointed out, students can reach other students in ways that a campus minister cannot. But students on their own have limited capabilities. It has taken Trip four years to get students ready for this important role. Our campus ministers work hard to train students to lead high-quality Bible studies.

Your prayers and donations are enabling our campus ministers to train students to lead effective Bible studies. Thanks for your support! As you make your year-end donations, please give to your favorite RUF campus minister.

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.



Remember to visit our RUF Northeast web site! We have pictures from our summer conference! Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this code →

Advent Reflections

Arise, the kingdom is at hand,
The King is drawing nigh;
Arise with joy, thou faithful band,
To meet the Lord Most High!

Look up, ye souls, weighed down with care,
The Sovereign is not far;
Look up, faint hearts, from your despair,
Behold the Morning Star!

Hope, O ye broken hearts, at last!
The King comes on in might;
He loved us in the ages past,
When we lay wrapped in night.

Now fear and wrath to joy give place,
Now are our sorrows o'er,
Since God hath made us in His grace
His children evermore.

– Johann Rist, 1651



Another year, another set of problems. At least the election is over! And Christmas is coming! A chance to relax and celebrate. But even Christmas can be a headache. As our family grows larger, even getting everyone in the same place is a huge problem, not even counting how to feed and house them.

Johann Rist reminds us that Christmas is not about the babe in the manger as much as it is about the King and Sovereign and Lord Most High. Jesus came as King not to lord it over us, but to lift up souls weighed down – even with Christmas preparation! He came to encourage faint hearts and heal broken hearts. Jesus is the bright Morning Star who pierced the night of sin and sorrow, and ushered in the joyful Kingdom of God.

Are you, or ones you know, not joyful this Christmastide? During Advent we remember that the first coming of Jesus tarried long, and the second coming is yet to be. In this life we long for the complete end of suffering and sadness. But still, we know that He who "loved us in the ages past" loves us still. And that is enough to bring us Christmas joy.

