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Double the fun with a single mission

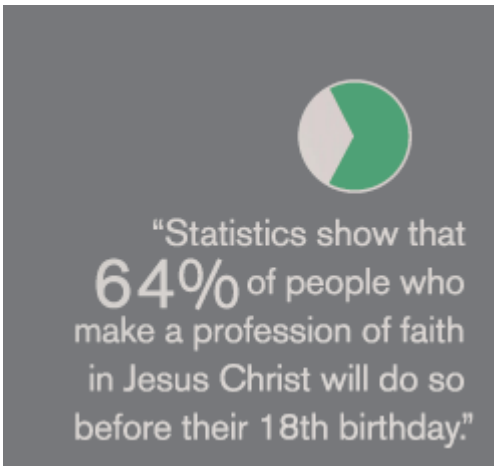
February 01, 2009 ¦ Mitzi Bible

Though this statement on Rick and Mick Vigneulle's website sounds serious, it's the reason why the twins have been doing sidesplitting comedy for 25 years.

The brothers attended Liberty (then Lynchburg Baptist College) in its formative years and studied youth ministry. They credit Liberty with giving them everything they needed to lead a ministry that has seen more than 92,000 youth and adults accept Jesus Christ.

"There's no doubt we would never have done this had we not learned what we did in Lynchburg," said Rick. "The training that we got gave us the platform to do youth work on our own."

Mick said they often talk about Liberty at their shows: "Liberty gave us everything as far as our livelihood — our wives, our families and my best lifelong friends. We would have never been in the area of ministry we're in right now had we not gone to Liberty."



IN THE BEGINNING

Originally from Alabama, the twins ventured to Liberty in the mid- 1970s. Both musically talented, they played guitars and sang for college events and Bible studies at least four hours a week.

"They allowed that to be our Christian service because we were able to stay busy at it," Mick said.

They also participated in the Youth Aflame singers, a traveling group that presented its "PEOPLE" program in public junior and senior high schools up and down the East Coast.

"We saw a lot of kids come to faith in Christ at those assemblies, and that's where we said, 'Hey, I'd like to do this for the rest of my life,' — never dreaming that we ever would," Mick said.

After graduation, they worked at the college and at TRBC. They helped direct the Liberty Baptist College singers, a full-time road chorale, and worked closely with the late Dr. Jerry Falwell at his "I Love America" rallies across the U.S.

After leaving TRBC and doing comedy, music and speaking at camps and conferences for a few years, a youth pastor in Colorado told them he had opportunities for them in a public high school there.

"First we thought he was joking," Mick said.

The two went for what they thought was a school assembly, but it ended up being a music class with about 20 students. Their first act went over well and they stayed to perform for more classes and assembly programs that whole week. At the end, they held an outreach after school hours and 800 kids showed up.

“I believe the Lord was really gracious because we had 200 decisions that night,” Mick said. “Once that happened, we were hooked.”

ON THE ROAD

On Sept. 1, 2007, the now internationally known Christian comedy and contemporary music artists celebrated 25 years in the ministry. In an anniversary DVD, Jonathan Falwell (senior pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church), along with other notable Christian leaders, thanked Rick and Mick.

“You guys were so special to my dad and are still special to my mom and the rest of my family,” Falwell said in the video. “… Only Heaven will know how many people have come to know Christ because of your commitment to serving Him.”

That commitment has led them to middle schools and high schools — public and private — in all 50 states and in 14 countries. In public schools, their “Attitude Check” assemblies start off with high-energy comedy. When the brothers are introduced, they often run on stage armed with mega squirt guns.

Fun Facts

RICK’S GANG: Wife Debbie, children: Tiffany (husband Steven), Brandon and Josh.

MICK’S GANG: Wife Sue, children: Mandy (husband Joel), Ashley, Drew, Abby and Anna.

HOME: Wilsonville, Ala. Both families live on the same farm.

COMBINED HEIGHT: 10’ 8” (They’re both 5’ 4”)
AGE: 54

BIRTH ORDER: “Rick was born first, four minutes ahead; he would claim I’m his afterbirth.” (Mick)

HOW WE’RE DIFFERENT: “I tell people the only way you can tell us apart is that Rick has a mole on his bottom.” (Mick, “Not true, but good for shock

value!”)

HOW WE’RE ALIKE: “We’re both extroverts. We both love ministry; our heartbeat is evangelism. We both love people; God’s given us a love for people and it doesn’t matter the age bracket.” (Mick)

“We hit the Beach Boys’ ‘Surfing USA’ and spray everybody down,” Mick said. “Our approach to doing assembly programs is to keep them off guard; because if we can keep them laughing the first 20-30 minutes … then we can turn the corner and get serious. Our philosophy is if we can get a young person to laugh, we can get them to listen.”

When the brothers do settle down, they talk to teens about building self-image and dealing with substance abuse, suicide, academic and peer pressure, depression, loneliness and anger.

Students have also heard from Lee and JJ Jorgensen, grandparents of Cassie Bernall, who was shot and killed at Columbine High School. Though recently retired, the couple traveled with Rick and Mick for eight years, telling Cassie’s story.

Students are then invited to a follow-up “pizza blast” party at a neutral location, where they get a free dinner and see more “idiot comedy” (such as the Grecian Urn Skit, where Rick and Mick are dressed in togas and act like human fountains) before hearing the talk behind their walk — the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The idea is to reach the unchurched: “Many are very nice people, but they don’t know about Christ. They’ll come to a meeting like ours, but wouldn’t darken the doors of the church,” Rick said. He said once, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, they saw 1,334 people make decisions in four days of outreach.

Besides public schools, they have also performed at Christian schools, churches, men’s rehabilitation homes, ice hockey rinks, ski resorts and even a rodeo Bible camp in the Dakotas. They’ve been everywhere from the small villages outside Nome, Alaska, to the Orient, Honduras and Great Britain. The brothers have been invited to sing at a restaurant on the Sea of Galilee, with the possibility of performing to Israeli troops.

The pair has also performed at the White House and for professional sports teams, and has been featured on TV’s “60 Minutes” and “America’s Funniest People.” They’ve shared the platform with such notables as Adrian Rogers, Zig Ziglar, Drs. Tim and Beverly LaHaye and Josh McDowell.

UP TO THE CHALLENGE

“A lot of people ask us, ‘When do you want to quit doing high school assemblies?’ Well, when we start being ineffective,” Rick said.

Judging from the success of their recent events and their busy schedule for the upcoming year, that won’t be anytime soon.

The brothers have found a way to continue to reach youth, even when challenges arose.

“When we first got started there was a respect for God, country, that sort of thing — we could actually talk about the Lord when we first started out in these assemblies,” Rick said.

Mick added: “We just couldn’t give a public invitation; if kids wanted to come up to you afterward and wanted to talk to you, no problem. You could lead them to Christ right there in the schools and it was no big deal.” A few years later they were being told: “You can mention God, just don’t mention Jesus; make it generic, that way you’re not offending anybody.” Then, a few years after that, “They said you can’t mention God anymore, you can do that at your own meetings, after school hours.”

They experienced political correctness to the point that public schools in New York handed them a list of 35 words they couldn’t use.

Now, 25 years later?

“It’s come so far that they accuse us of using the school assembly program as a platform to perform our ministry,” Mick said.

But, “We don’t deny it,” Rick added. “Our whole approach is educational, and the educators love what we’re doing, yet at the same time it’s a platform to be able to use this in a ministry setting … it’s a totally 100 percent secular program, inviting them out to a neutral program for one single cause, to see people come to Christ.”

That mission will remain clear wherever their ministry takes them.

“We feel like the hope of the country is of course Christ,” Rick said. “If we lose that opportunity to win the kids to Christ, we’re going to lose our country, because 100 percent of our nation’s youth is 100 percent of our nation’s future.”

For more information, go to www.rickandmick.com or www.attitudecheck.net. If you are interested in partnering with Rick & Mick or would like to schedule an outreach in your area, email Kevin@rickandmick.com.