Liberty University
DigitalCommons@Liberty University

October/November 2009 2009

10-2009

Not Seminary as Usual

Liberty University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_oct

Recommended Citation
Liberty University, "Not Seminary as Usual" (2009). *October/November 2009*. Paper 2.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_oct/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2009 at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in October/November 2009 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.

Not Seminary as Usual

October 01, 2009 ¦ Teresa Dunham

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary students don't show up for class wearing three-piece suits and somber expressions.

"We've got punk rockers, goth musicians, academics, guys in suits," said LBTS President Ergun Caner. "And they're all welcome here. I tell the faculty our dress code is that you dress like a church planter."

For most Seminary students, that means looking like the people they plan on reaching. They are in touch with current culture and with God.
That's not the only way Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary stands out from other seminaries across the nation. LBTS emphatically teaches General Atonement — meaning Christ died for every person — and it is Pre-millennial and Pre-tribulational in its view of the end times. Students believe Christ is going to return soon, and they are pro-Israel.

"There are fewer and fewer schools every day that hold this [solid view of the scriptures]. They've bought into all kinds of fads," Caner said.
Students in the Seminary are pursuing their master's degrees, the ministry-minded M.Div., doctorates of ministry and even their Ph.D.'s for a career in academia. Taught by some of the leading biblical scholars and evangelists in the world, such as Gary Habermas and Ed Hindson, LBTS students know their Scriptures and can give a strong defense of their faith.

“I think our seminary has always had one foot in academics and the other foot in the real world of ministry. We want to be aggressively reaching people for Christ,” said Dr. Daniel Mitchell, academic dean of the Seminary.

With three Korean professors, the Seminary draws many students from abroad.

As the LBTS motto says, it’s “Not Seminary as Usual.”

“I think there’s a relaxed environment here,” said student Ryan Jones, 31. “It’s just very practical.”

PUSH FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Church planting is the new vision of LBTS. Rather than stepping into an already-established pulpit, church planters start from scratch and raise a new congregation.

“In America, there are more churches closing every year than there are being started,” said Dave Earley, Chairman of the Department of Pastoral Leadership and Church Planting.

That’s why LBTS is so fervent about church planting. Thomas Road Baptist Church Senior Pastor Jonathan Falwell has set a goal of planting 500 churches — and it is the Seminary’s natural duty to train enough people to fulfill that vision.

Earley, a 1985 Seminary graduate, planted a large church in Ohio and has returned to LBTS to teachothers how to plant churches. Since 2006, Liberty University’s entities have successfully started more than 70 churches.

Classes teach future church planters how to communicate a vision, gather followers, train leaders, fulfill their goals and combat spiritual warfare.

The students have an entrepreneurial spirit, and their faith is strong enough that they can take risks. As their churches grow, they can train people who can plant more churches.

Recent graduate Gabriel Turner, 30, wants to plant a church in Charlottesville, Va., and the Seminary has put him in contact with people who can help him.

“Life runs on relational tracks, and the beautiful thing about church planting is that you have the opportunity to do life and do ministry with people that you enjoy being with,” he said.

SPREADING THE WORD

The Seminary is focused on producing hands-on leaders.

“You can’t teach evangelism in the classroom,” said Dr. David Wheeler, who primarily instructs on evangelism.

He has helped LBTS organize block parties and sports evangelism events, as well as more unconventional outreach methods such as a “gas buy-down” at a local filling station. For two hours, students bought a quarter off every gallon that patrons purchased. They also pumped gas, washed windows, prayed for people and told them about Jesus.

“Evangelism is not something you do. It’s who you are,” Wheeler said. “I don’t want my students to say, ‘Let’s meet and go out.’ I want my students just to go.”

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Moving forward, LBTS would like to be in its own 100,000 square-foot building in five years. This shift would help accommodate growth, a necessary move because LBTS is quickly becoming one of the largest seminaries in America.

About 600 students are expected this fall, and 5,000 will study online. The Seminary’s goal for the next few years is 1,000 residential students and 10,000 online.

For students who want to become the next generation of college professors, the Seminary now offers a new Ph.D. in Theology and Apologetics. The program started with 10 students, and LBTS plans to accept 15 more each year.

The Seminary hopes to add additional Ph.D. programs, and leaders are currently in discussions with the law school to offer a four-year joint degree (Juris Doctorate and M.A. in Ministry). Caner also hopes for a Women’s Ministry Ph.D. someday.

Dr. Carl Deimer, who has taught at LBTS since the beginning, remembers when the Seminary used to meet downtown in the 1970s.

“I see God’s hand from the beginning to the present,” he said. “God is faithful, and as we have been faithful to Him, He has rewarded us with success.”

Visit Liberty.edu/Seminary for more information about the dozens of degree programs and concentrations offered at LBTS.