

Spring Break Ministry

Tammy Fann Davis

Thousands upon thousands of college students flock to beach and ski resorts during spring holidays to escape the rigors of higher education. In their search for the “good life,” Southern Baptists have a unique opportunity to show these students the way to abundant life through the person of Jesus Christ. The Good News must be shared with the thousands of young adults who go to resorts seeking happiness, hope, and peace. To reach college students, a program must be planned to involve committed Christian college students in sharing their faith. The experience will prove to be life changing for all involved.

Getting Organized

Baptists tend to function by committees; so first, a Spring Break Planning Committee must be formed. Set a date at least one year prior to the anticipated Spring Break program for the first organizational meeting.

Whether planning at the state or local level, involve at least the following three persons: Evangelism Director, Student Director, and Resort Director. If an official director does not exist, select someone who relates to that emphasis area.

Once the Spring Break Planning Committee has been organized, the following agenda items need to be determined:

1. Location and dates
2. Statement of purpose and goals
3. Promotion and registration
4. Witness training
5. Program activities
6. Lodging, food, and local transportation

Location and Dates

Select a location that has drawn a high number of college-age guests in the past. Draw broad, general lines of reference for the area you desire to reach. Dates are best determined by contacting the Chamber of Commerce at the location and inquiring when the most college tour groups are visiting the area. The dates around Easter are not always the time for the largest crowd since most universities schedule their break according to when the middle of the semester occurs. After several years, you will become aware of the best dates to plan for the event.

Statement of Purpose and Objectives

The Committee should write a statement of purpose for the project and establish goals and action plans to accomplish that purpose. Two prominent purposes are: (1) To share Christ with lost college students and, (2) To train Christian college students how to share their faith in Christ. Both are important to the program and need to be balanced. Many students

have come to me following the program and stated, "I never knew it could be so much fun to witness." They return to their college campuses as bolder witnesses for Christ.

Promotion and Registration

Promotional materials must be designed and prepared by August of the year preceding the planned Spring Break program. A brochure which includes the what, why, where, and when of the event should be written. This brochure should be sent to the Baptist Student Union director at all universities and colleges within one day's drive of the event.

A registration form should be included in the brochure to keep from requiring an additional mailing. Decide upon a central office for processing registration forms. Normally, a \$10-\$15 registration fee per student is sufficient and should be non-refundable after two weeks prior to the event.

Plan high visibility of the program with the state Baptist Student organization. Coordinate promotion with the state student director at state BSU conventions and through student newsletters, etc. Focus promotion on the purpose of the project.

Witness Training

Good witness training is vital to the success of the program. The witness trainer selected should have an understanding of the resort setting and know how to train people in leisure evangelism. Teaching the students to be natural in their approach and to speak the language of the world, avoiding "churchy" clichés to which secular society cannot relate, is important.

Four to six hours of training need to be scheduled. The process of training, then giving a witness assignment and returning for more training and another assignment, etc., has proven to be the most effective approach.

For example: the first session might focus on meeting strangers and starting a conversation. The assignment would be to go to the beach or ski slope and be friendly, and try to engage at least one person in conversation. Each training session builds on the one before until the student is comfortable talking to strangers and leading them into a conversation about spiritual things and ultimately sharing their personal testimony.

On-campus training is highly encouraged prior to the group's arrival at the project. A SHARE seminar or lay evangelism school might be held at the school. Emphasis on personal devotions and Scripture memory in preparation for the trip should also be encouraged.

Provide follow-up resources for the students to use such as the *Survival Kit for New Christians* and an easy to understand modern translation of the Bible, such as the Contemporary English Version. Teach the students the importance of getting names and addresses of those interested for further follow-up. Another idea would be to secure enrollment forms from LifeWay Christian Resources to enroll the person in the *Master Plan* program that provides eight weekly Bible lessons on understanding one's new life in Christ.

Remember, without adequate witness training, the students will experience frustration and disappointment. The key to a student feeling victory will be learning how to share his/her faith in love. Actually leading someone to Christ will simply be icing on the cake.

Program Activities

A variety of activities should be planned to involve the Christian students in relationships with other students. The types of activities scheduled will depend upon the location. A beach location might focus on structured recreation, while a ski location might focus on evening get-togethers at a popular nightspot or time on the lifts talking to individuals.

Activities should focus on attracting the college crowd. Be sure permission is secured from all parties before the activity is scheduled. Let the city or management know that you are seeking to provide alternative forms of entertainment for the college crowd that de-emphasize drugs and alcohol while promoting a good time.

If 100 Christian students are participating in the program, do not send them all to one location. Break them up into groups of 10 to 15, with these groups divided into pairs, and assign them to various areas of the resort.

Another activity which is beneficial to an on-going program and establishment of relationships with local city management is to offer to provide volunteers for some of the city's projects. Approach the city manager to determine existing needs, and then offer to help meet those needs. Volunteers may be needed to help with crowd-control or first-aid. Providing a unit for emergency relief in a highly visible area may assist the police in meeting needs. Be open to doing anything within reason, even if it means collecting trash. Every circumstance, if approached with the right attitude, can be an opportunity for sharing the gospel of Christ.

Daily Bible study and prayer and share times are essential for a successful program. The focal point must always be on Christ and the Scripture. Local pastors make good Bible study leaders, and BSU directors serve well as small group facilitators. Bible study and prayer time are a must for the program.

Lodging, Food, and Local Transportation

Every aspect of the program should focus on keeping Christian students in contact with the other students. Lodging the students in motels provides an excellent opportunity for the Christian students to have more encounters with other students and thus, more chances to witness. Group reservations should be made 9 to 12 months prior to the planned program. Generally, when assured that your students will not be wild and destructive, but add a more wholesome atmosphere to the motel surroundings, management will be willing to give a good rate. The students should pay for their own motel expense. (Four students to a room cuts down on individual cost.) Usually, the BSU covers transportation and often raises money to assist with the motel cost. When the students are expected to contribute financially, they demonstrate a higher level of commitment and seriousness to the task.

The local area can assist the students by providing meals (lunch and dinner). A central location should be secured for all mealtimes. A church fellowship hall with kitchen facilities is best. Churches in the association can be asked to take one or two meals, volunteering to provide and serve the food. Advantages to this approach are that the local churches become involved in the mission project, and as members of the church interrelate with the college students, they share in the group's enthusiasm for telling the "Good News." The local people return to their churches with exciting stories to tell about what is happening in the resort area.

Each BSU group is expected to provide its own local transportation. As assignments are made to different locations, the available modes of transportation need to be kept in mind.

Students Have Written . . .

“Through the Spring Break program I have seen, in a very real way, the power of God and how I *must* rely on Him to open doors and lead me in. God has really opened my eyes to human need and shown me what true (not condescending) love is.”

“God has taught me so much about *Himself*. I am learning to truly love God through *servicing*. Thanks for the opportunity to share and grow this week.”

“I feel renewed in my relationship with Christ. It was a tremendous experience that has changed my life!”

A Personal Note

Though planning and implementing a spring break program was hectic and the hours were long and tiresome, those days spent with the college students were some of the best days of my ministry. I have never felt, nor seen, such a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit as I experienced during those times. I personally believe that this was a result of the tremendous time spent in prayer in planning and carrying out the program. Prayer was always given priority. Many were indirectly involved as prayer warriors. The vibrant presence of God's spirit was evidence that he heard our prayers.

Though hundreds may not have been saved, many came to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The program always resulted in changed lives for all persons involved. Planning a spring break project will be a challenge, but one well worth the effort. The memories of those spring break days witnessing on the beach are forever etched in my mind.

Adapted from an article by Tammy Davis in the 1993 National Resort Ministries Conference notebook. Used by permission.