



## TEACHING IN A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

### MY STORY

In 2007 I was offered a contract to begin teaching at The Holy Seed College in their new seminary. The school was located in Tassia, Imara, Jerusalem and was a ministry of Apostle William Simiyu. Was the Apostle of The Holy Seed Church and the founder President of the College. LBC had been started just two years earlier in 2007.

This was the fulfillment of a dream. In the fall semester in 2002, while a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, I felt a definite calling from God to teach in a seminary. I was in my first semester and was glad the call was received at that time. When I started seminary that fall, I was married and had Four Sons.

After graduation I contacted the Kenyan Baptist seminaries, explain my call and preparation, and applied for a teaching position. I assumed that since I was a Kenyan Baptist and had graduated from the college and seminary, God would have me teach in an SBC school. God's ways are not our ways, nor is timing our timing. Only one of the seminaries responded, and they basically said "Thanks, but no thanks."

More than two years later, on a special Sunday afternoon, I received a telephone call from Dr. peter Wafula, the dean of the new seminary at LBC. After an almost one-hour telephone interview, he offered me a teaching position at LBC in the new seminary, which was opening that fall. More than thirty-eight years later, I continue to teach at what has now become Liberty University with a very large and beautiful campus and about sixty thousand students in resident and online programs. I think it has been a good investment of my life!

### CHRISTIAN SCHOOL TEACHERS

I have told you my story, but it is not uniquely different from that of other teachers in Christian colleges. Let me share some of the common characteristics of those of us teaching in Christian colleges.

1) A conversion experience and growth in the Christian life are required. I remember hearing many years ago of people being upset about an unconverted

Jew teaching in a Baptist college. Although that sentiment may not be as strong today in some liberal Christian schools, those we would consider evangelical still require their teachers to be practicing Christians. They are expected to be saved and to be living like it, which means growing in Christ.

A part of this growth would be growth in the understanding of the Scriptures. It would not be expected that a teacher of math, science, or languages would have the level of Bible knowledge a Bible or theology professor would have, but he would be expected to pass a job interview test on basic Bible knowledge.

- 2) Adequate academic preparation is required. Colleges generally require teachers to have one degree above the courses they are teaching. A teacher teaching bachelor-level courses would be expected to have at least a master's degree, but most colleges desire to have a high percentage of faculties with a terminal or doctor's degree. Teachers obviously must teach in the discipline of their preparation.

Accreditation may be an issue in the teacher's training if accreditation is important to the college. An accredited college must have almost the entire faculty made up of graduates of accredited colleges and universities. The need to maintain accreditation can make hiring decisions difficult when the administration must find a science teacher with a Ph.D., probably from a state university, who believes in the biblical account of Creation.

- 3) A calling from God is probably not a firm requirement, but Christian colleges will usually ask in the interview process, "Why do you want to teach here?" Many of my friends who teach at Liberty and not just in religion would testify to a sense of the call of God for them to come to Liberty. A sense of calling or desire to be submissive to the leading of God would be expected of a mature Christian.

However, even though there are additional requirements for Christian college teachers, there is not extra compensation for the additional requirements. Most Christian college teachers have taken a salary cut if they have come from another vocation even a staff position in a local church. In my case, when I left my position as associate pastor of a church, my salary was more than one third less at the Christian college. And this is not an unusual experience. Teachers willingly do this

because money is not the most important consideration; following God's direction in their life is.

A sense that one is investing in the lives of others also is a big incentive for teachers. Whether one is teaching English, math, history, or business but especially religion, teachers feel they are investing in the lives of future pastors, missionaries, and church staff members by preparing them to be more effective in their jobs and having a part in their success.

### **TEACHING AT A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**

Prayer in the classroom is one of the special things about teaching in a Christian school. At liberty and at most Christian schools professors are required to begin each class with prayer. I ask for praises and requests, and students share both. It is an opportunity to learn what is happening in the lives of students. We pray for sick family members and friends, for the unsaved (including some the student may have just witnessed to), for jobs, for car tires, and for all so of thins.

At LU we have convocation three times each week. LU is a large school, and the speakers at convocation are significant people. Pastors, missionaries, and evangelists are frequent speakers and have included many prominent evangelical leaders.

Mission week is a special emphasis week at Christian colleges. Missionaries serving in many parts of the world and representing many missionary-sending agencies are brought to the campus for this event. They speak in regular chapels and sometimes in special chapels, in classrooms, or at club or organizational meetings. In general, these missionaries make themselves available to students.

Spiritual emphasis week is a special time each year in many Christian colleges. Early in the semester, a gifted preacher or evangelist is brought to the campus of special services designed to help students know for sure they are saved or help them to make a decision to accept Christ as Savior. Most of the young people coming to a Christian college are from a church background and have made a public profession of faith and ben baptized. But many college students do have a genuine conversion experience at college, and a lot of these happen during spiritual emphasis week. This is a definite plus for a Christian college.



All of the classes are taught with a distinctive Christian worldview. This is true in history, math, science, business, nursing, and every other discipline. This is part of the reason faculty must be growing and knowledgeable Christians. The facts of history are taught as in any school of higher learning, but from the perspective that God's hand is revealed in history. The facts of science are taught, but the Creator God is revealed behind the laws of science. Business is taught, but with a strong moral and ethical base this is to guide the businessperson.

Dorm life at a Christ college is different. There are no coed dorms with males and females sharing space. It is very different from dorm life at secular schools, especially those that are known as "party school."

Coaches who build winning teams but also Christian character are a part of Christian schools. Many Christian colleges have a strong emphasis on athletics and provide opportunities for Christian young people to compete on college athletic teams as a means of serving God. Christian Schools compete to win, and winning is important; but it is not the only thing. Developing character and displaying good sportsmanship are also important. Coaches are selected not just on the basis of skills in coaching their particular sport but also for their skills in developing character.

Development of lifelong friendships occurs at Christian colleges. This is the age at which this naturally occurs, but in a Christ college students are taking classes with people who have similar interests. They begin to establish a network of friends who can assist them vocationally. Students are also with other students who share their commitment to God, which is another positive factor in long-term relationship building. Many relationships that develop in Christian colleges become lifetime friendships. Sometimes they may result in a lifetime relationship as husband and wife. Ministry teams at Christian colleges provide opportunities for service and ministry. Music, drama, and other ministry teams go out several weekends each month to minister in churches. These students usually stay in homes of church members, which is beneficial for the college in recruiting new students and in gaining support. They also provide a big plus to the church services where they are involved. Some scholarship assistance is available for Students on these ministry teams. Students on ministry teams that relate to their major or minor are provided an opportunity to enhance their education with this hands on experience.

Christian and or community service is a requirement at almost all Christian colleges. The service can be provided in a church, in the community, or at the college. Church services would include helping in Sunday school, Awana, music, youth programs, or similar activities. Community service could involve organizations like Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Child Evangelism Fellowship, hospitals, and other programs. Service at the college could include prayer ministry, assisting a professor with grading, office work, research, and other unpaid ways of serving. Students are usually expected to volunteer about three hours each week to their Christian service project. This provides a great ministry outlet for all the academic information about serving the Lord they are receiving in the classroom.

One of my fondest memories of a Christian service project was as a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. One night a week, about ten of us took a school van down to the French market. One group would start the music to gather a crowd, and another group of us would go into the bars and invite patrons to come to our service. Those street preaching experiences in an area with so much sin have stayed with me for fifty years.

Bible, theology, and evangelism classes are required for every student in every major at Liberty. This is a very special part of the educational process, especially for those from high schools where the Bible was not taught as an academic subject. Knowledge of the Bible is lacking among many, even most Christian college students. Students in Christian colleges learn how to study the Bible, as well as much about the Bible, something they can build on for the rest of their lives. Other classes in religion teach how to live the Spirit filled and Spirit controlled life. Students are taught evangelism and learn how to witness to the unsaved and lead them to Christ.

For sixteen years I pastored a small country church located close to the Christian college where I teach, Liberty University. I was blessed to have five Liberty graduates in the membership: three majored in education, one in business, and one in public relations. Their commitment to Christ, their level of Christian maturity, and their ability to serve in the church, especially in teaching the Bible, far exceeded the abilities of others their age and probably many older adults. When teaching future pastors in the seminary class, I have tried to train them to

include in their church programs not only a new members class but also a preparatory type of class that would include Bible and theological surveys, topic on living the Christian life, evangelism, leadership, stewardship, missions and , and more.

However, it was very obvious to me that the five graduates of Liberty University did not need this additional training. They had received this and more from their education at a Christian college. Education at a Christian college will prepare a person to make a living, but it will also prepare a person to live. He will graduate with a desire to live a productive Christian life that is pleasing to God and serves mankind through the church of Jesus Christ. A Christian college education makes a big difference in a person's life. Like other Christian college teachers I am so thankful that God has allowed me to spend my ministry life teaching in a Christian college and contributing to those changed and equipped lives. It has been a special blessing to hear graduates of the school and of my teaching say how we made a difference in their lives.

