"Help! What do I do now?"

Kasia Beck’s phone screen lit up.

"Praise God! Emily received Christ!" the text read.

Soon after, a second text arrived. "Help! What do I do now?"

Kasia Beck rejoiced to receive these texts from professor Cheryl Irish of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Kasia had been advising and praying for Dr. Irish as she led a small group of former students through a Bible study for spiritual seekers.

Now that one of the students trusted Christ, Kasia showed Dr. Irish how to take Emily through Cru’s basic follow-up material covering topics like:

• Assurance of salvation.
• How to deal with sin in your lives.
• The importance of growing as a Christian.

In their ministry at Miami, Kasia and her husband, Dennis, equip Christian professors to take steps of faith on campus. They mentor the professors using Cru’s evangelism and discipleship materials. And they connect them with Cru’s student ministry staff at Miami who value the Christian maturity and expertise of these faculty members.

When freshman student Paul Gunasalu attended his first Cru meeting, he checked a box on a comment card indicating that he would like to be discipled. Usually freshman students are discipled by an older student leader or by one of the Cru staff. But Paul got an email from engineering professor Dr. Tim Cameron offering to begin a discipleship relationship with him.

Who connected this student and professor? Dennis Beck, who was once a professor himself and is a big believer in the power of students and faculty working together. "There are young men out there who want to have an older male figure in their lives," he says. "We want to capitalize on that!"

Unlike professional mentoring, these discipleship relationships focus on personal and spiritual growth. Dennis connected five professors with students who wanted to grow in their faith. To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, Dennis carefully matched the professors with students who would not be in their mentor’s classes.

For three years, Dr. Cameron and Paul have met for an hour every other week. Through this mentoring, Paul has grown in his understanding of the Christian faith and continues to coach them through occasional visits and Skype.

"Dr. Cheryl Irish is now at Shawnee State University investing in the lives of students there. "That's the beauty of ministry to and equipping adults," Kasia says. "If you help them catch that vision, you now have a lifelong missional laborer."
Faculty Profile: Dr. Heidi Winslow, Faculty Lecturer, School of Nursing, UNC Wilmington

In nursing there are countless daily moments that make a difference in the life of a patient. We are there for those moments. In my nursing and teaching, I share a deep passion to share the message that EVERYONE has the opportunity for love, peace, and joy in Jesus—even in the most devastating tragedies," Dr. Heidi Winslow explains.

In 1998 Heidi met Faculty Commons representatives Shane and Dorenda Harlsey through church. When the Harleys started a fellowship for Christian professors in 2008, Heidi immediately became involved. “Heidi was a catalyst for starting Faculty Commons at UNCW,” Shane affirms. “She owns the ministry, welcomes people into, and shares her passion for Christ. God uses her devotion to Him and ministry to unify and promote community in the group.”

“Faculty Commons gave me the boldness I needed and encourages faculty to stand together to take a risk for His kingdom,” declares Heidi. Shane cites some of Heidi’s many contributions to faculty ministry at UNCW. She:

• Co-encourtes the monthly Faculty Commons luncheons.

• Serves on the faculty leadership team.

• Posted her spiritual story on MeetTheProf.com.

• Speaks at many faculty and student events.

• Signs her name to every faculty outreach ad in the student newspaper. These ads allow faculty to jointly and publicly acknowledge their faith and provide an opening to talk with students about Christ.

Join us in Prayer

I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

1. Ask God to connect first year grad students with other Christian grad students and link them with grad ministries around the country.

2. Pray that God provides the presence of at least one Christian professor for the over 4 million freshmen who are new on campus this fall.

3. Ask God to use the Spanish version of our book A Greater Story in Latin America.

A New Normal for Grads

Ashley Holleman, National Director, Cru’s Grad Student Ministry

After the spring semester ended and knowing to get to know and reaching out to grad students at the University of Texas at Austin, last fall Faculty Commons staff member Angela Ebert launched a grad movement on campus. There were two committed grad student leaders, a small group of interested Christ-following grad students, and her husband, Gordon. Angela was encouraged that they were showing up but honestly wondered, "Can we really go after the campus together if students don't know each other and seemingly have very little time?" The odds didn't seem to be in their favor. So, she began to pray.

It was a busy, slow start. But over the next several months, students began to form friendships and connect as they studied Scripture together. And then something unexpected happened.

In December, Angela and Gordon invited the students to their home one Saturday morning for training on how to initiate spiritual conversations with their grad peers. Saturday morning is one of the few precious times in the week that the grads have free, so the Eberts thought only a few students would show up. But seven students—over half of the group—walked through their door. And they were so ready to learn!

That morning changed the way they encouraged and prayed for one another. Previously during their weekly gathering, students broke up into groups of three for a few minutes to pray for each other regarding "next steps of faith" stemming from their Bible study discussion. After the training, students began to share how they had taken an opportunity with a peer to talk about spiritual or heart-level issues. It was especially fun to hear engineering student Anna share one week that two women from her lab group started meeting with her to discuss the Bible.

Initially, most of the students had been resistant to bring up deeper or spiritual topics with their peers. But as God began to work in their hearts, quite a few students began to take bold steps of faith to initiate spiritual conversations with their peers.

Students have now noted:

• Wondering out loud about God over an evening snack of pumpkin bread in the lab.

• Exploring the family culture of a friend during a Saturday morning hike at Bull Creek.

• Planning a trip for the UT Austin grad students who are beginning to see themselves not just as "stressed and busy" but as kingdom-minded ambassadors living out the gospel in their everyday lives.

• Praying for these grads as they trust God for a gospel presence in every grad department on campus. When we think of the spiritual impact of the students and faculty on this campus, we couldn’t agree more with UT’s own slogan, “What starts here changes the world.”

Defined by Passion and Service

Recently Heidi joined 68 others at the Faculty Commons A Common Call conference for Christian professors in Raleigh, NC. The keynote speaker inspired her when describing ways to reach out to students. One suggestion involved hosting a movie night—including free pizza—with questions about the movie to stimulate spiritual conversations. “Now I want to host a pizza night!” Heidi exclaims.

Recently Heidi got a call asking if she would like to host a Pizza Night on campus. Heidi immediately agreed because my dean has identified as a Christ-centered leader. Shane and Dorenda Harlsey at Faculty Commons, together with an incredible network of professors and graduate students to take the hope of Jesus Christ to the world: gave.cru.org/2271527.

A Final Words

I’ll tell you exactly when I knew Union with Christ was for me. It was for the first page of the first chapter when Rankin Wilbourne recounts the scene from the movie Tidewater Memoirs where two of the main characters were baptized and talking about it soon thereafter. Sonny said, “Everybody said I was going to feel like a changed person. I guess I do feel a little different. But I don’t feel a whole lot different. Do you?” Mac answered, “Not yet.”

Do you resonate with that? Do you feel a whole lot different? Why do I, on many days, feel pretty much the same as I did before I became a Christian? Why does the Christian life often feel like the same old, same old? Where is the joy? I once experienced? Why do the rivers of living waters that are supposed to flow from my innermost being feel like a trickle instead of Niagara Falls? If this book can answer those questions for me, it can tell me how to experience the living God in a vibrant and ongoing way, without using worn out platitudes, I don’t just want to read it, I have to read it. This book did not disappoint.

Wilbourne, senior pastor of Pacific Crossroads Church in Los Angeles, says that the mystery is in understanding our union with Christ. The gap between what we are actually experiencing and what we are created to experience is there because we don’t embrace our union with Christ the way the apostles did, the early church did, the reformers did, and the Puritans did.

I’m not going to try to explain this mysterious union with Christ in this book review because I would be cheating you out of the masterful guidance that Wilbourne so beautifully lays out. He has the remarkable gift of taking something that is not new and making it come alive and become oh, so tantalizing and fresh.

I don’t know that I’ve come across a more personally impactful book since reading J. I. Packer’s Knowing God years ago. I’ve now bought over a dozen copies of Union with Christ and given them to some of the people I love most. I believe you will, too.