



THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE

VISION AND MISSION

One of the greatest obstacles to leading a campus ministry is the transient nature of the college campus. Just as the ministry is beginning to gel and form into a real biblical community, the semester ends and everyone vacates for an entire month. January feels like you're starting the ministry all over again.

But in the world of campus ministry every obstacle is at the same time an opportunity, and that opportunity is the Christmas Conference. This is a chance to gather the most committed members of your ministry for five days of the most incredible fellowship, worship, Bible teaching, and outreach. In this case the Christmas break actually serves to accelerate your ministry instead of hinder it. Students return to campus ready and eager to lead, to serve, and to reach the campus for Christ.

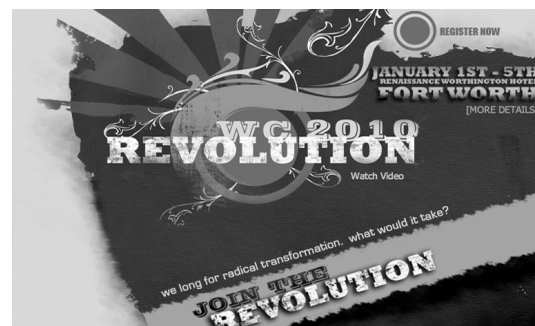
What's a Christmas Conference like? Here's how the conference team in Indianapolis describes the experience:

- Hanging with 2,000 of your best (or newest) friends from colleges in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan.
- Learning about God through engaging speakers with amazing life stories.
- Connecting with the Lord through group worship with a live band.
- Sleeping in one of two really sweet hotels (think "heavenly beds" ...).
- Taking the gospel to the people of Indianapolis through the Community Outreach.
- Growing in your relationship with God and experiencing true life change!

The Denver Conference puts it more poetically:

"We want to see your life changed. We want to see the world changed. The Denver Christmas Conference (DCC) is a gathering for college students everywhere to hear from God, to acknowledge our need for Jesus, to rebel against injustice, to find healing for our brokenness, to obtain freedom from our addictions, to get guidance for our future, and to get grounded in the Scriptures. It's a place to explore who we were created to be and what we were created to do. Over 1,500 people will come together to powerfully pray for God to reveal his GLORY to our hearts, our campuses, our cities, and our world."

COMPONENTS OF THE CONFERENCE



Besides turning a huge negative (Christmas break) into a positive, there are certain elements of the Christmas Conference that uniquely contribute to the growth and development of the ministry. In fact, it would not be inaccurate to say that the Christmas Conference (or something just like it) is irreplaceable in what it contributes to the development of a true biblical community on campus. Here are a few of those irreplaceable elements:

A HEART FOR THE WORLD

Through stories, videos, speakers, and seminars, students are exposed to what God is doing around



the world. For many Christians this is the first time they'll fully grasp and embrace Jesus' Commission to go into the world and "make disciples of all nations." Everything is theory and head-knowledge until it's experienced first-hand. Here, students are exposed to the world of missions. The Christmas Conference can transform a campus ministry into a missionary movement as students leave the conference eager to return to campus to make an impact for Christ.

TRAINING

Besides Bible teaching there is an enormous offering of seminars to teach and train in basic ministry skills. Students learn how to share their faith, lead a Bible study, and disciple other students; they learn how to defend their faith, study the Scripture, and lead a prayer meeting; they become leaders and laborers in the ministry and not just spectators. Here is a sampling of just some of the seminars available at one Christmas Conference.

- Adventures in Dating
- Christ Centered Bible Study
- Christ Centered Life
- Discovering God's Will
- Doctrine-Dug Down Deep
- Experiencing God's Love
- Heart of a Leader
- Healthcare Professionals
- How to Share Christ
- Good news About Injustice
- The Ministry of the Holy Spirit
- I Believe in God
- Theological Women
- Leading A Movement
- Leading a Small Group
- Living a life transformed
- Sharing Christ with your Family
- Transition to the Real World
- Workplace Ministry
- World Class Discipleship

VISION

As a minority on campus, Christians can feel isolated, irrelevant, and impotent. To be at a conference with a thousand or two, fellow believers from colleges and universities throughout the country is visionary. You feel that you are a part of something bigger than just yourself and your campus, and of course you are—Christ is building his church everywhere, and on every campus. At the Christmas Conference students get a glimpse of the larger body of Christ and it is awesome.

WORSHIP

To be in a room with a thousand other students praising God is to get a taste of heaven, a taste of the glory and majesty of God. In the life of Israel there were certain times of the year when everyone came to the Temple in Jerusalem for this sole purpose. God knows that some times we need 'big,' the Christmas conference provides 'big.'

DAY OF OUTREACH

Unlike a Fall Retreat the Christmas Conference has an element of ministry and outreach: a day when students put their faith into action out in the community. The word of God comes alive in students as they go out to help the homeless and needy and share Christ with the hopeless. On the evening of the Day of Outreach students share stories of the amazing and miraculous things they've experienced as God ministered in and through them. This heart for ministry is one of the intangibles students take away from the conference and bring back to campus.

COMMUNITY

Spending a full, five days together with other students from your campus builds those deep cords of friendship. This is where your ministry starts to become a family: where students truly begin to love and care for one another.

TEACHING

Not that students don't get helpful biblical teaching and messages back on campus but at the Christmas Conference they are exposed some of the most gifted, passionate, and knowledgeable communicators of the Word. Besides hearing great messages, the more important result is that a passion is sparked for God's Word. It is only when someone brings out the full-meaning of a Bible passage that you realize how much meaning is in there. Students leave with a hunger for the Scripture.

As we've said, Christmas Conference builds momentum in the ministry at a time that it would normally be lost.





CONFERENCE LOCATIONS AND DATES

- Boston, MA *January 2-6*
- Baltimore, MD *December 28 - January 1*
- Greenboro, NC *December 28 - January 1*
- Atlanta, GA *December 29 - January 2*
- Indianapolis, IN *December 28 - January 1*
- Twin Cities, MN *December 28 - January 1*
- Denver, CO *January 2-7*
- Ft. Worth, TX *January 1-5*
- Portland, OR *December 28 - January 2*
- San Diego, CA *December 28 - January 1*

To go to the current Christmas Conference website for your region follow this [link](#).

PROMOTING THE CONFERENCE

And so it is that the growth of your ministry is to some degree tied to how many students attend one of these ten regional conferences. To that end it is critical as leader to promote and publicize the Christmas Conference. Here is a suggested timeline of promotion starting in October.

Mid October. Inform and Educate. Introduce the Christmas Conference at your Fall Retreat or weekly meeting through a series of skits/announcements. Pass out brochures.

Late October. Make a banner for your weekly meeting. Meet with student leaders. Make a list of all students involved in the movement. Agree on goals and prayer targets. Plan fund-raisers because you will want to start executing these strategies by early November. Begin to consider transportation issues.

Early November. All ministry leaders should be registered this week before all-out promotion begins. As leaders it's critical to set an example and essential to challenge others to come along. For thoughts on how and why to challenge someone to a conference, see the article "The Power of an Ask."

November. All-out promotion. Testimonies, skits and general promotion at your weekly meeting. Banner and Sign-up table are also prominent at the meeting. Leadership makes sure that every student has either been asked or challenged to come to the conference. Hold a letter writing party for those students who need to raise money for the conference.

December. Online registration deadline is Dec. 10 in order to receive a discount.

FUND RAISING

Considering you'll be staying at five-star hotel for five days, the cost of the conference is extremely cheap. That said, it will still run around \$200 and most students don't have that kind of money lying around.

Therefore finances can be a barrier to students getting to the conference. And yet it doesn't need to be. There are some simple things most any student can do to garner the money they need to get to the conference. For ideas and suggestions, read the article "Raising Money for Conferences and Retreats."