

**BCM Highlight – Penetrating Darkness with the Light**

**George Wright, Speaker**

**The Columbia Metro Connection Podcast 025**

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Chris Reinolds: Welcome to the Columbia Metro Connection Podcast where you can go to get valuable, relevant, and quality resources for you and your congregation. The Columbia Metro Connection is sponsored and supported by the Columbia Metro Baptist Association, and the almost 100 family churches that support the ministry of the CMBA. Hosts for this week’s episode are George Bullard, the Executive Director of the Columbia Metro Baptist Association, and I'm Chris Reinolds, Certified Church Consultant and Lead Pastor at Killian Baptist Church. This entire week we have a special set of podcasts that we're releasing to celebrate the incredible work that is taking place through the Baptist Collegiate Ministry.

 A few weeks ago, we had a conversation with the new director of the BCM, Jamie Rogers, about what God is doing in the Columbia area colleges. Over the course of this week, we're going to be releasing a total of three podcasts dealing with the subject of how the BCM is seeking to reach the next generation of leaders by partnering with churches. We also want to encourage you to take the challenge to begin prayerfully considering how you and your church can get involved in this significant work.

 For today's podcast, we're going to be listening in to George Wright Pastor at Shandon Baptist Church as he gives his testimony as to the work of the BCM in his own life and calling to go into the dark places of the world and be the light of the gospel. Let's listen in.

Jamie Rogers: It's my honor just to be able to say thank you George for allowing us to use Shandon's building today, and to host our meeting in. I want to call you up, if you would, to come, and just to share your testimony, a little of your story about your life at USC. He's a graduate at USC. It's really neat to have him in town, and for me to be able to be the BCM director while he's here. Hey man, thank for being here, and thank you for coming.

George Wright: I'll be quick too because y'all been sitting there a long time, and I appreciate it. We are glad to be able to host you, and glad you're here. It's always easy to host a lunch when you don't have to provide the lunch, so George thank you for providing the lunch. We do appreciate it.

 My story real quick, I have a very unique perspective on college ministry as a pastor here in Columbia because my calling to ministry happened at the church that I now pastor as a college student. I was called to ministry here at Shandon, which is pretty amazing how the Lord has brought us full circle, and I have the privilege of pastoring here.

 But, my quick story of being a college student at USC, I'm a diehard gamecock. When I got to Carolina I was the 19th member of my family to go to the University of South Carolina. We now are up to 27, or 28 from our family that have gone to Carolina. It's truly bleeding garnet in our family. We mourn every football season. I mean that's just how we live.

 Every August we're excited, and by every October we're in mourning. That's just the way our life goes, but we do love the University of South Carolina, so it was really a pretty easy choice for me to attend the University of South Carolina.

 When I got to Carolina as a freshman I really had a desire as a young college student walking with the Lord to do anything I could to make an impact on campus. I mean that really was my heart's desire as a freshman at Carolina, and got involved in some ministry stuff here at Shandon. I got involved with Young Life. I was a Young Life Leader in college.

 I got very convicted, at really over the Christmas break of my freshmen year getting ready to come back for the spring semester, that most of the people I was spending time with as a freshman at Carolina were all Christians. Again, we've heard all the stats, and we talked about the reality that yeah, there is a group of Christian students, but the majority, the overwhelming majority, are not believers, and we know that. I was just very personally convicted of that.

 One of the ways the Lord convicted me was through the Sermon on the Mount. Y'all are familiar with that. I've got my Bible here open to that. Matthew 5, "You are the light of the world. The city on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand and it gives a light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

 The Lord really used that passage in my life at a key time in my life to convict me. Okay, you've gotten to know a lot of Christian kids, and you're doing a lot of Christian things with Christian people at Carolina, but the overwhelming majority of the students at the University of South Carolina are not believers, so what are you doing about that? And so, when I came back to Carolina after Christmas break I decided I was going to go through fraternity rush, and I was going to join a fraternity. Where is the darkest place on a dark campus? Greek Village, there it is, right.

 It was an interesting experience for me because I felt very strongly that this was something that the Lord was prompting, that the Lord was leading me to go try and live out my faith as a light in a dark world in a dark place at the University of South Carolina. What I experienced from a group of Christian friends was something I had not experienced until that point in my life. They began to be very critical of me. "How dare you go be a fraternity boy? What, are you walking away from your faith?" "Oh yeah, yeah, George is just backsliding. Hey, oh, but, we'll pray for you. We'll pray for you."

 In my mind I'm thinking, well why don't you come with me? Let's go do what the scripture says. Let's go be a light in the darkness. Let's go find some blue water like we talk about here in Shandon College. We don't need to just huddle all up together, we need to go live this out. Let's go live the mission.

 One of the things that I have come to believe I think is true not only in college ministry, but in all ministry, and this is one of my personal passions, I believe far too often we are more afraid of the dark than we are confident of the light. When the question was asked earlier, "Why is college ministry so hard?" I'll tell you why it's hard. We are more afraid of the darkness on college campuses than we are confident of the light of Jesus Christ penetrating that darkness.

 Let's just be honest. I mean the majority of people in our churches don't share their faith because they're afraid of lost people. They're afraid of, what are they going to say? They're going to judge me. They're going to persecute me. They're going to ridicule me. They're going to mock me. We are more afraid too often of the darkness than we are confident of the light.

 I'm so grateful that at that crucial point in my life, and this is where I'll wrap up, at that crucial point in my life when the Lord was prompting me to go join a fraternity, and try to live out my faith in a dark world, the college pastor at the time here at Shandon was a guy named Steve Turner. Many of you may know Steve, a really great guy. He was the college minister here for a long time, now with the North American Mission Board. Steve, as my college pastor, came to me and said, "Hey, if this is what God is calling you to do, I'd love to help in any way that I can."

 Steve began to disciple me in that process. He began to come to campus, and pray with me. When I moved into our fraternity housing, which that was a crazy experience of trying to be light in the darkness, Steve would come to our fraternity housing every single week, and help me lead a little Bible study. We had three or four guys that would show up to this little fraternity Bible study. But, I'm so grateful that I had a man of God who was willing to say, "Don't hide from the darkness. No, God is calling you to be a light in the darkness, and I'll go with you." He came along beside me, and he discipled me, and he taught me how to live out my faith in a very real and tangible way. It forever shaped my life, and that was the beginning of my calling to ministry.

 I didn't know that at the time, but as I began to be friends with these fraternity brothers, guys that I really loved that were far from God, I realized there were not many people that were followers of Jesus that were pursuing these guys. These were the guys that people had written off. They are too far gone to be reached with the gospel. That was the way it felt. And yet, I realized these are guys that desperately, desperately need Jesus. On the surface, they look like they've got things going on for them, but internally they are dying. They are desperate. They are searching. They are hopeless. They need the truth of Jesus Christ in their life.

 Thankfully, I got to experience some guys come to Christ. God used that time in my life to call me to full time gospel ministry. I began to pray. Lord, if there is ever a way that I could pastor a church where guys like my fraternity brothers would feel welcome to come hear the good news of the gospel, please use my life to do that. I'm thankful. It's really been crazy for me in the last two years to have some of my fraternity brothers actually start coming to Shandon, and attend church here. It's just crazy to think about how that prayer has been answered, and it's a privilege to be a part of that.

 But, I would just say, just as my wrap up, I wholeheartedly believe in college ministry. I'm passionate about college ministry because God did a significant work in my life as a college student through one man specifically and several others that were willing to speak into my life as I was forming these lifelong decisions and direction for my life, and come alongside me, disciple me, and encourage me to live as a light in the darkness.

 There are students all around us, it's been said by Raj, and Billy, and Rob. It's been said many times today. There are students all around us that are just waiting for someone to come alongside them and say, "You can do this. The light is better than the darkness. The light is more powerful than the darkness. 'Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.' Let's go reach this campus."

 I would encourage all of us to be that voice to one student, a group of students, many students. Whatever the Lord brings into your circle of influence be that voice that says, "He that is in you is greater than He that is in the world." Let's go reach this campus because these campuses desperately need the good news of the gospel. That's what I got. Thanks for letting me share. I appreciate it.

Chris Reinolds: And to all of our listeners, thank you for joining with us. Please be sure to check out the show notes for more detailed information about today's show. Also, if you found this podcast helpful for you and your ministry, share it with others, so we can get the word out about what God is doing. Until next time, from all of us at the Columbia Metro Connection, we thank you for listening. I urge you to share this podcast with everyone you know. It's the good news about the Good News in the Columbia Metro Baptist Association.