

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DISCIPLING BLACK WOMEN

Why is the discipleship of Black women crucial? How would the kingdom be advanced?

RENEWAL OF THE CAMPUS AND THE CHURCH

On the majority of our campuses and churches, an increasing majority of Black participants are women. Our ability to equip and empower these women has become essential—both on campus and in the church.

RELATIONAL EVANGELISM

As women are transformed and discipled they are compelled to transform the lives of friends, family, etc. Women often have strong relational connections; they are aware of the needs and issues in the lives of their friends and thus can share the gospel with them in a more relevant and meaningful manner.

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF BLACK FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Many women come from church contexts where there have been limited opportunities to exercise their leadership gifts. The opportunities to lead and minister that a campus fellowship provides can develop and sharpen their abilities, and prepare them to become effective Christian leaders in the future.

RAISING UP REDEEMED, CHRIST-CENTERED WOMEN

There are many challenges and areas of sin and brokenness that Black women disproportionately face. As we learn how to effectively address these issues with the gospel, we will raise up a generation of healed, redeemed and powerful women of God.

GOD-HONORING RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGES

The discipleship of Black women strengthens the community of believers by giving opportunities to model healthy cross-gender relationships. Learning to make Christ-centered choices about relationships in college can equip them to make the more important decision about marriage—a decision which will have a profound and long-term impact on their lives.

MINISTRY DIAGNOSTIC: KEY OBSTACLES

There are a number of obstacles to effective discipleship of Black women. What are some of the key obstacles for your fellowship? Which are ones that you have potential influence over, and that you can prayerfully work towards changing? (If you are working in a multi-ethnic chapter, many of the obstacles listed in that Next Steps resources will be applicable here as well.)

Take some time with your staff or leadership team to discuss the obstacles listed below. Check the 3 issues you believe are the largest obstacles to effective discipleship of Black women in your fellowship. (Obviously to do this well, you will need to have had previous interactions and discussions with Black female students—for some that might be your first next step.)

OVERCOMMITMENT

Many Black women are involved in multiple organizations on campus (i.e. campus organizations, Christian fellowships, sororities, gospel choirs, liturgical dance ministries, etc.) and therefore have a myriad of demands placed on their schedules. As such, it may be difficult for them to opt into greater involvement and discipleship within the InterVarsity context.

RESISTANCE TO VULNERABILITY

Black women are often dealing with brokenness and deep wounds that result both from committing sin and from having sin committed against them. Issues of fear and trust that arise from brokenness and/or wounds may make it difficult for Black women to enter into discipling relationships, as the openness that discipleship requires may expose issues that they have tried to suppress or ignore.

FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES UNATTRACTIVE

How does the chapter fellowship together? What does the group do for fun? If the times of fellowship and the hangouts don't incorporate the activities many Black women typically enjoy, they will be less interested in being involved in the community.

RELEVANCE FACTOR

Though there are similarities between the issues that students deal with, some of the primary struggles, needs, temptations, and sins that students face differ across racial, cultural and gender lines. The topics and discipleship areas that the InterVarsity fellowship emphasizes may not seem relevant to the everyday lives and interests of many Black female students.

KEY OBSTACLES CNT'D

THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY

For many campus organizations, one of the most compelling aspects for students is community. This is particularly true for Black women, as there is a strong desire to be accepted and affirmed by the Black community at large. At times “choosing into” deep investment into the InterVarsity group can feel like it requires “choosing out” of the broader Black community.

POOR RELATIONSHIP CHOICES

Unfaithful choices about relationships can have enormous consequence for women--spiritually, emotionally, physically, etc. The lack of Christ-centered men exacerbates this issue, and women may “settle” for relationships that ultimately become “stumbling blocks” for the work of God in their lives.

SELF RELIANCE

Many Black women feel a high need to take care of themselves and resolve their own problems because of the many ways in which sin has affected them. Some Black women buy into the myth that to be strong (“The Strong Black Woman”), one must be more capable than anyone else in juggling the demands of life, be impervious to pain, and cannot ask for help or guidance. Allowing someone to come alongside and walk with them can be terrifying, and make some Black women feel as though they aren’t as strong and self-sufficient as they would like to be.

CROSS-GENDER/CROSS-CULTURAL CHALLENGES

As there are many shared experiences within the Black female community, Black women may feel more comfortable looking to other Black women when dealing with issues related to discipleship. This can limit their willingness to be discipled by men and women of different ethnicities, races, and cultures.

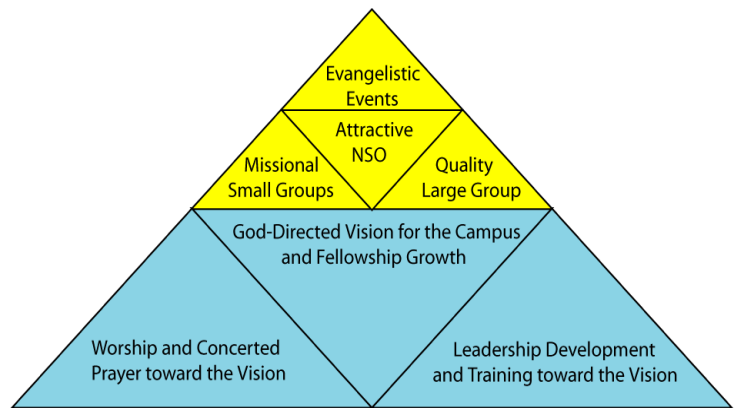
OTHER:

MINISTRY DIAGNOSTIC: FELLOWSHIP ASSESSMENT

What are the core weaknesses for your fellowship in discipling Black women?

The principles for effective discipleship of Black women can be assessed in the context of the overall chapter building framework. Greater effectiveness will involve integrating this value into your overall chapter building efforts.

In which areas is the integration of this value strongest, and in which is it weakest? Where might be the most strategic areas to focus?



Take some time with your staff or leadership team to review the categories below, check the 2 areas you believe are strongest, and 2 that are weakest. Remember that the blue bottom 3 triangles are the “behind the scenes work” that lay the foundation for the rest of the pyramid. You may make short-term gains without those 3, but they will be critical for longer-term and larger scale advances.

VISION

Does your fellowship’s vision meaningfully include discipleship of Black women? Does the student leadership understand why effectiveness in this area is critical to attaining the fellowship’s goals?

PRAYER

Is this an issue that your fellowship prays about explicitly? To what extent is this issue a concern in the fellowship overall?

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Are there leaders in your fellowship who are being equipped for effective discipleship of Black women? Are they aware of the obstacles that need to be overcome?

FELLOWSHIP ASSESSMENT CNT'D

QUALITY LARGE GROUPS

Are your large groups attractive and relevant to Black women? Are they taken into account as the speakers, format, atmosphere and objectives for your large groups are decided upon?

MISSIONAL SMALL GROUPS

Is there a ministry or small group(s) in your fellowship that sees effective outreach to Black students as a critical component of their mission?

NEW STUDENT OUTREACH

Is your New Student Outreach attractive to Black women? Are there intentional efforts made to do things that would draw them?

EVANGELISTIC EVENTS

Do your evangelistic events engage issues of interest to Black women? Are they aware of your events, and are they being effectively invited to them?

NEXT STEPS I: LOCATING PEOPLE RESOURCES

As you begin to diagnose your situation, you probably will need to find people who can assist you. These might be people who can advise or counsel you—even if they cannot do it regularly, they might be willing to sit down with you once or twice to provide insight and suggestions. There might also be people who can speak at Large Groups or retreats, train staff or student leaders, invest in your Black students, etc.

Look at the ministry obstacles and challenges that you listed, along with the priority needs you determined in your fellowship assessment. Who might be good resource people? Here are some questions that may help you find them; go through each of these questions with your Staff or leadership team. You may need to find other students or local community members to help you answer some of these questions.

1—Are there any predominately Black churches that students on your campus attend? Are there people in these churches that could be potential resource people? Ask students who attend.

2—Are there any Black Christian faculty or staff on your campus?

3—Are there Staff in your region (Black and Non-Black) who have had some success in discipling Black women? “Who can help you identify staff outside of your region that would be willing to provide guidance?”

4—Are there people on your campus who may not be Christian, but have some training/knowledge regarding dynamics with Black women? Take an opportunity to connect with them and see what applicable insights they have.

5—Are there people organizing events that you could take your students to which could help them grow in ministry to Black women?

6—Have you asked other staff in the area/region about resources they could suggest? Are there local community members or students who can help you with these questions?

NEXT STEPS II: STRATEGIC TIPS

As you discern strategies to move forward in this area, your best resources will probably be people resources and material resources. Additionally, we have included some strategic tips that have been effective in different InterVarsity fellowships. Many of these tips are relevant to students in general and not solely to Black women. Go through this list with your staff or leadership team, and determine some strategic next steps that you can take.

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY

A key component in discipling Black women is to establish a network of women from the community who are willing to partner in discipleship. It will be beneficial to encourage students to get involved with a group in the community that will support the student in their identity development.

BE AWARE OF THE DIVERSITY AMONG BLACK WOMEN

Do not expect black women to fit into a certain mold. The African Diaspora is diverse- African American, African National, Afro-Caribbean, etc.

ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

It's helpful to give black women space to talk about themselves. This is for both of you. You will uncover the realities of their character and this allows them space to be vulnerable.

LIFE MANAGEMENT: DEALING WITH OVERCOMMITMENT

You will encounter competent overachievers who are reluctant to be vulnerable. Don't be quick to force women to drop community commitments in order to be involved in InterVarsity. Help them prioritize their commitments, and then empower them to be effective.

RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR INNER HEALING

Scripture and prayer are crucial elements in the discipleship of black women. In the context of other resources, prayer and scripture hold a significant amount of weight and authority for Black women in their journey to inner healing.

NEXT STEPS III: SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

Here are some passages that have been helpful for Staff in discipling Black women. We focused on character studies, as they can be an effective way of engaging Black women through scripture in Christian leadership and spiritual development. We've also included bullet points on some of the main issues addressed in each passage.

ESTHER, THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Themes:

- Crisis with ethnic identity
- Integrity
- Becoming a true leader
- Action at a critical moment—"for such a time as this."

VASHATI, ESTHER 1

- A woman of valor, integrity
- Brave, courageous
- Suffers through her choice to hold on to her self-worth and dignity

RUTH, THE BOOK OF RUTH

- Faithfulness in the midst of suffering and loss
- Loyal through uncertainty and displacement
- Dealing with a lack of positive male figures
- Cross-ethnic relationship
- Living faithfully in a countercultural context

PROVERBS 31:10-31

- Woman of Character
- Strong steward of relationships, vocation and responsibilities.
- Her reverence and acknowledgement of God is implicit.

ABIGAIL, 1 SAMUEL 25

- Did not become embittered by the mistreatment she suffered and witnessed.
- A courageous woman who stood in the gap.

NEXT STEPS IV: MATERIAL RESOURCES

Often there are material resources (books, bible study guides, training exercises, etc.) that can be helpful. As you are determining the “next steps” in advancing your ministry, here are a few material resources to keep in mind:

McDonald, Skip, “And She Lived Happily Ever: Finding Fulfillment as a Single Woman.” A book about living in grace and fulfillment as a single woman--written by a single woman.

McDonald, Skip, “Christ My life: The Great Exchange.” This book explores the intimate union with Jesus Christ. It investigates the exchange of your life for Christ’s life.

Jakes, T.D., “Woman, Thou Art Loosed!: Healing the Wounds of the Past.” The balm of this book will soothe all manner of traumas, tragedies, and disappointments.

****Antoine, Raney and Carla, “Christian Manual: A Tool for Christian Discipleship.”** This book was written to extensively cover many different areas and aspects of ministry, thus preparing you to flow in God’s Ministry, to which He has called you, with excellence.

Eldredge, John and Stasi, “Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul.” This groundbreaking book shows readers the glorious design of women before the fall, describes how the feminine heart can be restored, and casts a vision for the power, freedom, and beauty of a woman released to be all she was meant to be.

Seamands, David A., “Healing for Damaged Emotions.” This book has helped hundreds of thousands of readers worldwide deal honestly and successfully with their inner hurts and then become agents of healing for fellow strugglers.

Wright, H. Norman, “Always Daddy's Girl.” This book will lead you into “understanding your Father’s impact on who you are”.

Weems, Renita, “What Matters Most: Ten Lessons in Living Passionately from the Song of Solomon.” This book uses the inspirational wisdom of the Old Testament's Song of Solomon to share ten important lessons for women on how to discover the role of passion and how to develop meaning and direction in their lives.

Brown, Teresa L. Fry, “Can a Sister Get a Little Help? Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry.”

MATERIAL RESOURCES CNT'D

Patterson, Sheron C., "New Faith: A Black Christian Woman's Guide to Reformation, Re-Creation, Rediscovery, Renaissance, Resurrection, and Revival."

Rose, Sylvia, "Rise up: A Call to Leadership for African-American Women."

****Brown-Collins, Alice, "The Plight of Black Women on Campus."**

<http://www.intervarsity.org/sjj/article/1479>, This article hits specific issues that are necessary for the Black woman's discipleship and empowerment.

****This is an especially helpful resource for the discipler****

BCM NEXT STEPS SUMMARY

TARGET AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

What are the 3 key obstacles you are seeking to address?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

What two areas of chapter building are weaknesses you need to invest in?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

NEXT STEPS TO TAKE:

What two areas of chapter building are strengths you can capitalize on?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

Which strategic tips in particular will be helpful as you take your next steps?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Who are people resources that can help you take your next steps?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

What might be important scriptural and material resources for taking these next steps?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____