



# **5 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR THE UNDERSTAFFED COLLEGIATE LEADER**

**HOW ROBOTS, PAPERWORK AND THE DISCIPLES  
CAN GIVE YOU MORE TIME FOR MINISTRY**

# **JESSE EUBANKS**



LOVE THY NEIGHBORHOOD

# SOCIAL JUSTICE INTERNSHIPS & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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Each year, young adults ages 18-29 move into the inner city to experience a social justice internship supported by Christian community and discipleship. Live and work with other young adults to help a hurting community together. Receive the time, guidance and structure you need to grow personally in your faith and life skills. **SERVE FOR A SUMMER OR YEAR.**

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# FOREWORD.

I have a confession. When I was in college, I always avoided going to collegiate ministries.

I would go on occasion - usually because it involved free food and I was a poor college kid - but I was always resistant. I thought collegiate ministries were lame. I equated them with interpretive dances where it always seemed like the kids portraying the sinners dressed like me. Whatever my standard of "cool" was at the time, collegiate ministries didn't make the cut.

I was sometimes pretty vocal with my friends concerning my opinions on all of this. I can't count the number of times I said, "Collegiate ministry isn't for me." God was obviously eavesdropping on this conversation because many years later he started sending me out on the road to speak at collegiate ministries on a regular basis. (Point taken, God. I have found it best to stop using the word "never" concerning my future plans.)

The good news is that God has since showed me what I couldn't see 15 years ago: campus ministries are doing vital, important work. The micro-communities of college students across the country who love Jesus, each other and their classmates are beautiful expressions of the Holy Spirit at work among us. Year after year, collegiate leaders encounter students standing at a crossroads in their lives. Students make crucial decisions regarding their beliefs and faith during these important years.

Being with young adults during these critical years brings many joys and many challenges. It is common to see collegiate leaders who are overwhelmed. This is understandable. Collegiate leaders can often

experience erratic schedules filled with real-time needs. The volume of pain, worry and logistics that collegiate leaders take on can become crippling.

For almost 10 years, I have been working with young adults through Love Thy Neighborhood. We provide young adults with full time social justice internships supported by Christian community and discipleship. We help them grow into servant-leaders and equip them with the life skills and relational skills they need to transition into adulthood. Young adults come and spend a summer or year of their lives with us. I understand the complexities of leading young adults through this season of life. I also know what it's like to have a small staff (there are just 2 of us) and depend on volunteers. In other words: I speak your language.

I hope you find this short e-book made especially for Collegiate Leaders helpful. My hope is that these tips and tools provide you with more freedom in your schedule to care for the souls of your students as well as allowing Jesus to care for yours.

By the way, years later I married a woman who became a Christian through a collegiate ministry. Our first date somehow ended with us flipping pancakes and welcoming incoming freshman to a collegiate ministry on a campus neither of us attended. I have the spatula we used engraved with the date hanging up in my home - a reminder to stop saying "never".

Jesse Eubanks  
Executive Director  
Love Thy Neighborhood

# Principle #1: Let the Robots Do Some of the Lifting.

Recently, I had a problem.

I couldn't correspond with our young adults or new applicants as well as I needed to. The volume of personalized nurture was just too much. I became a bit hypersensitive to people's requests from me. "Can you meet to help me serve my neighbors better?" ("Why are you so needy?", I would think to myself.) "Do you want to go out for pancakes? (Why are you SO demanding?!)" "Can you hand me that pen?" (Good grief! This kid's codependency is off the charts! I think we might need to medicate him.)

I got desperate.

How could I make all of the phone calls I needed to make? How could I remember to send out a series of emails consistently when I have so many other logistics to keep track of? How could I even keep up with our social media schedule? How could I track all the contact data for our young adults? It was all just too much.

So our Operations Administrator and I sat down and decided that the robots needed to do some heavy lifting for us. We decided to use as many pieces of technology as we could to fill as many gaps as we could. Here are the best tools we found:

**MAILCHIMP:** Mailchimp is an online newsletter management system. The basic version is free. Use this system to talk with your students via email. Here is why I think it is better than any other service I have found. Their best feature is the “automated workflow” system. Here is how it works: You write a series of emails and you can set it to release those emails on a pre-determined schedule. For example, you could write a series of emails introducing someone to your campus ministry. The first email might be a link to a selfie video of you personally welcoming them. The next email might be a written post about how to get into a small group with links to the leader’s email addresses. The third email might be testimonies of students whose lives have been changed by the ministry. After you create your emails, you can set them to trigger as you want. We often set them to send the first email immediately after someone subscribes and then we stagger out the other 4 messages over the following 2-3 weeks. The point is that I only create content and I don’t have to remember to send each person a personal email on a specific date.

**CHIMPADEEDOO:** Because we’re a small staff, we don’t have time to enter names and email addresses into Mailchimp. Chimpadeedoo is an iPad app that will allow your students to input their data and it will automatically upload straight into Mailchimp. Also, if you’ve set up an automated workflow, the video of you welcoming them to your campus ministry will already be waiting in their inbox when they check their email later that night.

**WUFOO:** Wufoo is an online form builder. The basic version is free. We manage all of our applications, references and general inquiries here. It’s easy to use and you can set it to send the submitted form data to as many email addresses as needed. We even customize ours to segment

according to the internship they applied for and direct them to a video made especially for that internship. Again, the keys here are automation and customization.

**ZAPIER:** Zapier is a fantastic tool that connects other online services. Let me give you a couple of simple examples. Imagine that after a student applies for a mission trip, they receive an automated personalized text message from you. Or imagine that the references they listed on their application receive automated customized emails from you through your Gmail account. Imagine that their data is automatically filed inside a Google Document - all without you doing ANYTHING. This is what Zapier does. It connects two different electronic programs and makes them to talk to each other to create automated reactions.

**HOOTSUITE:** Hootsuite is a social media scheduler. The basic version is free. A couple of years ago, we realized it was a better use of our time to sit down every week and schedule our social media uploads for the week ahead. Doing it in real-time had become too burdensome and distracting. Other times, we simply forgot to do it at all. Stop doing your social media in real-time. Instead, set aside an hour each week and schedule your social media posts.

You don't have the time to do so much manual work. Let the robots do it for you and you'll gain hours of valuable ministry time back.

# Principle #2: Require Reflection From Your Student Leaders.

I know some people who do collegiate ministry who try to meet one-on-one with all of their student leaders each week. As someone who also used to do this, let me just tell you my soft opinion about this:

*This is insane.* You're going to become grumpy. And no one likes you when you're grumpy.

Many years ago, I realized two things: First, I could no longer meet with all of our young adults. It was no longer practical. Second, I needed to have more clarity about their life that week before the meeting even started. I was spending 30 minutes or even an hour just trying to discern which areas of their life needed the most care. I just didn't have as much time as I used to and I needed to leverage my time for these young adults better than I had been.

For this reason, we started requiring all of our young adults to fill out weekly reflection forms. Every week, they spend about 25 minutes filling out these forms on Sunday night and turn them into me on Monday. In these forms, we ask them a few things:

- How many hours did you volunteer to ministry this week?
- What are the praises and problems of your ministry service this week?
- What are the praises and problems of your church life this week?
- What are the praises and problems of Christian friendships or communal living this week?
- What three ministry moments did you experience this week?
- What is the biggest thing going on in your life right now and how do you feel about it?
- This coming week, how is God calling you specifically to best love him and love other people?

Our folks have a love/hate relationship with these forms. Some people complain about having to do them each week and barely fill them out - giving us only two or three words for each question. But we have found that most people use it as a nourishing time of reflection. They approach it like a journal. These are great to read. They give us great insight into the current state of a young adult's heart and mind that week. When we step into a counseling situation with someone who has faithfully been filling out these forms, we are able to apply grace, insight or reproach with much greater precision.

Here is another reason why this is a great practice. Have you ever tried to work with someone who lacked self-awareness? If so, you know you can travel from Seaside Pines to Crazy Town in about 2 minutes. This practice helps our young adults learn the discipline of self-reflection and self-awareness. They learn how to pause, reflect on their week, glean meaning from their experiences, entrust things to the Lord and envision their week ahead. (As our ministries develop our future generation of leaders, these are pretty important skill sets.)

The other great thing is that when their time of service with us comes to an end, we are able to give all of their reflections back to them as a reminder of the journey Christ has brought them on.

Have your student leadership commit to filling these out and turning them in each week. (You could even use Wufoo online to make these forms easier to submit.) In the long run, these weekly reflections will help them grow in their self-awareness and help you serve them better.

# Principle #3: For Structure, Take Your Cue From the Early Church.

In the gospels we see Jesus respond moment by moment to the needs of the people. Watching him customize his love and response to each person he encounters is beautiful. People interrupt his schedule all the time. It's in line with his very specific mission. We want to reflect this type of presence in our own lives.

However, we see an interesting turn of events in the book of Acts that Collegiate Leaders need to pay more attention to. We see the early leaders become overwhelmed by the needs of the poor. The physical and relational needs are more than they can respond to. What do they do? If it happened today, we'd have some kind of staff meeting. Peter would turn to the weakest apostle and say, "Listen, I'm going to need you to start working weekends. It's just ten more hours a week. I'm sure your wife will understand. Your kids can come visit you at the office. We don't mind. Kids love swivel chairs."

Instead, we see the apostles say, "We need a new plan." We see them take the first steps toward creating a clarified leadership structure in the church and begin to delegate authority.

I think collegiate ministries need to have a better leadership structure. How can you structure your ministry in a way that reflects the wisdom of the early church?

- Surround yourself with two or three professional peers from other campuses or churches.

- Create a leadership team even among your students that you delegate authority to consistently.
- Give more counseling and training time to your top 12 leaders.
- Give even more attention to your top 3 or 4 leaders.
- Train your leadership team as a group.
- Create small groups and expect the small group leaders to be the first to step in to counsel attendees in need.
- Be selective on what counseling sessions and meetings you will take part in.

If you only have 45 hours each week to give to your collegiate ministry, how are you going to spend them? Who are you going to give them to?

Making ourselves available to anyone at anytime for any reason is not the Christian way of life. In fact, to deny our own human limitations is to be enslaved. It is enslavement to our desire to be a savior to other people. We need boundaries. We need sleep. Our spouses and children need us. We need to have a true day of rest. We need to cut the grass. Sometimes we need to go climb a mountain or play Fruit Ninja. Just like Christians in the early church, we have limits and limitations. We need a leadership structure that disburses the heavy load.

Creating a structure that distributes the responsibilities and relational needs of our ministries allows us to be better caretakers and leaders.

# Principle #4: Ask For Help Because We Can't Be a Professional At Everything.

Every now and then I feel the temptation to act like I know more than I do.

A young adult in our program will ask for my opinion on a topic and - without even pausing to consider whether I'm qualified to answer - words begin to free flow out of my mouth. I usually end up sounding like an idiot. And my words aren't usually very helpful either. The scariest part is when I see a look of youthful wonder on their face as they drink in everything I'm saying. Then I feel like they're an idiot for believing me. Then we're standing there having a conversation between two idiots. Each passing comment descends lower, making the previous one sound like Einstein in retrospect. I feel like we should charge admission and serve popcorn.

Here's the truth. I don't know everything. I don't even know *most* things. I could only be called an expert at a very *small* amount of things.

Maybe you don't struggle with the temptation or pressure to have answers to all the questions young adults ask you. But I do. When those moments arrive, I've found a simple truth that helps me:

I don't need to have all the answers. But I do need to give our young adults access to people that have answers.

The journey from being a teenager to an adult is often ambiguous and confusing. Not just on issues of faith but also on issues of family

relationships, student loans, marriage, car payments, career plans, oil changes, grocery shopping and budgeting. The world is a big place and life in the Western world is full of confusing complexities. Part of shepherding college students into adulthood involves equipping them with life skills.

- What life skills do your students regularly struggle with?
- What areas of life do your students regularly struggle with?
- Do you know anyone more qualified than you to teach on these topics?
- Can you ask this person to come in to do a special workshop or series?

I personally enjoy having other leaders come in to teach our young adults. It's common for our young adults to read a book and then have the author come join them for lunch to discuss it. Other times, we have leaders specializing in spiritual disciplines, personal finance, urban ministry or life skills come spend time with our young adults. These diverse experts provide a much greater breadth of wisdom than I ever could alone.

I also enjoy helping other leaders. I am often invited to come speak at collegiate events about God's work in at-risk urban communities, sharing the gospel with the marginalized or leading personality self-awareness workshops. (If I can be helpful to you as well, please contact me. I'd love to come visit your group in person or Skype in to your weekly meeting. I do this frequently and enjoy it deeply.)

You need to know what you are most qualified to teach and counsel on. Try to pull in other experts to assist you in areas where you are weak.

Learn from them. Maybe one day you could be an expert in that area as well.

# Principle #5: Create Your New Normal.

My wife sometimes has to remind me that I've started believing the same old lie again: "Things are only crazy this week/month/season but next week/month/season it will all change and be easier." I tell myself these lies because somewhere deep inside I believe that if life were always this crazy, I would never sleep again from anxiety. And we all know what a guy does late at night when he can't sleep. It's the reason people own snuggies and workout videos they've never opened. At 3am, every advertisement seems like a super bowl commercial created just for you. "You're right, Montel Williams! My problem IS that I don't juice my food enough!"

I think we believe that we don't have much influence over the things we encounter regularly in life. I think we often tell ourselves that most of our lives are out of our control. We end up living reactively. We allow dysfunctional rhythms such as working too much, staying up too late, avoiding time in prayer or allowing countless unscheduled walk-ins to dominate our life. We begin to feel tired and depleted and we wonder where our joy has gone. I see this often with collegiate leaders. The erratic lifestyles of college students are not always very kind to adult collegiate leaders.

While it's true that life does get intense at times due to unexpected hardships or events, it is also true that we have a great deal of influence over whatever becomes our normal.

What do you want your normal to be?

There are countless research studies that show the value of rhythm

and routine in daily life. Psychologists have proven that children that have boundaries, stability and rhythms grow into healthy adults. Jesus showed that his normal routine consisted of engaging with crowds of people and close friends followed by rising early to retreat into solitude and time alone. As parents, we shape what our children experience as normal. As ministry leaders, we shape what our young adults experience as normal.

We must understand our role in what becomes normal in our lives.

When it comes to your personal rhythms in life, what is normal for you? What do you like? What do you want to change? It's important that we are honest with ourselves about what has become normal and acceptable in our lives. Not all of it is bad. Not all of it is good.

A friend once told me, "There is nothing more important in life than the state of your own soul." I think he's right.

Jesus warned us that if we gain a thousand converts or a large campus ministry, but we deplete and destroy our own souls in the process, we've gained nothing.

Sit down and write out your schedule. Make a plan for the weekly rhythms you need to live by. Changing habits is hard so ask for encouragement or help from close friends.

Only you can create your new normal.



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