



MINISTERING WITH OPEN HANDS

It was in the fall of 1978. Roger Randall was settling into his role as the new national director of the high school ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, headquartered at Arrowhead Springs near San Bernardino, California.

Campus Crusade had 300 staff working in 22 cities to reach high school students for Christ, and disciple and equip them for leadership. They were not alone in their efforts. There were other national organizations including Youth for Christ, Young Life, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. And there were hundreds of church-based youth ministers also striving to reach out to youth.

Each ministry had a unique brand and style, each effective in their own way. But nearly all would have agreed that their combined ministries, including the church youth pastors, were falling far short of reaching out to the millions of teenagers who had become a culture all their own, and could no longer be seen as embracing the faith of their parents.

Seeing the need, Roger was looking for answers. He understood the difference between having a plan for reaching students on a high school campus and

having a vision for reaching an entire generation. At the time, there seemed to be no such vision, nor the unity required to see it happen.

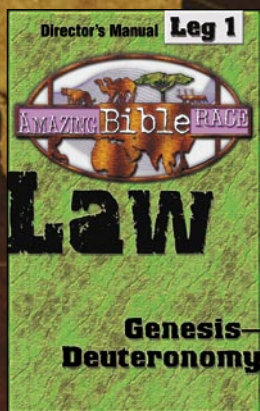
In a staff meeting one morning, Roger shared his frustration, his conviction, and his passion to do something more to reach the nation's young people. He wept openly, and invited the national office team to join him in prayer.

Later that day, I felt led to share with Roger a unique experience I had during my four years with the high school ministry in Washington, D.C., prior to coming to Arrowhead Springs. It centered around one man, Ron Jenkins. Ron was then the director of Youth for Christ in northern Virginia, just across the Potomac from D.C.

My wife Dee and I lived in northern Virginia while we were there, in a townhouse just inside the Beltway, nestled behind Madison High School. One day early in our first year, I heard a knock at our door. It was Ron. He introduced himself and welcomed us to the region. He said he wanted to help us get situated in our ministry and that he was there to serve us.

continued on page 23 ▶

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*Paul Fleischmann
President
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In the coming years, Ron made good on his offer. He showed us the region from top to bottom. He introduced me to all his friends, associates and gate keepers. He took me to his club meetings with students. He introduced us to the staff at National Presbyterian Church and St. Albans, a premiere private school in the District. Ron Jenkins threw out a red carpet of ministry opportunities that exceeded our greatest prayers!

Ron and I would discuss similarities and uniqueness in our ministries. We would pray together. But our relationship wasn't what I would call a "mutual arrangement." That was because Ron did most of the giving! He even helped us pick the schools to begin our ministry. If he had something going on there, he would quickly offer to withdraw. It was all about our needs and desires, and Ron being a servant. We worked as a team throughout our time in D.C.

A highlight of our experience together was to jointly host a Christmas conference, sponsored by YFC, Campus Crusade, and National Presbyterian Church. It drew over 400 students.

When I had shared with Roger my experience with Ron, he thanked me and not much more was said on the subject. A few days later, he stuck his head in my office and simply said, "I want us to hold a summit. I want you to get started on finding a place and creating an invitation list of the most influential youth pastors, parachurch leaders, and national youth speakers we can find, all related to reaching high school students."

That first "Forum," as the event came to be called, was never intended to be a large group (just 25 came that first year), but it was an influential one, because of the wealth of experience it represented. The dates were January 8-10, 1979. Campus Crusade hosted the meeting at Christ Haven, a retreat center in the Rocky Mountains an hour west of Colorado Springs.

The agenda for the Forum was four-fold:

1. To develop a spiritual camaraderie and commitment to one another.
2. To analyze and stay abreast of trends in the youth culture.
3. To keep appraised of what God is doing throughout each of the ministries represented so we

could be encouraged to believe Him more, and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

4. To assess the needs among the community of youth workers in America in areas of philosophy, skills, and tools; and brainstorm how to meet these needs in the future.

There were rich times of getting acquainted, sharing and brainstorming. And the rest of the time, they were in prayer. Indeed, there was more prayer than planning!

The Forum was a mighty success in many ways. Relationships were built, a deeper understanding of the youth culture was embraced, and strategies

Ron Jenkins modeled Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17.

for meeting the emotional and spiritual hunger of youth were implemented.

Two years later, the National Network of Youth Ministries was born out of that group's vision.

As far as I know, Ron Jenkins never attended a Forum. God took him home after an automobile accident in April 2003.

Yet, Ron Jenkins modeled a life of service and sacrifice to all who knew him. He left his mark on thousands of young lives. Many adult youth workers were impacted by Ron's "servant leadership lifestyle." His was a life well-lived for Christ.

Ron Jenkins modeled Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17. In my mind, his example had a mighty influence on what we now know as the National Network of Youth Ministries. ↻



Dr. Dan Maltby serves on the board of directors for the National Network of Youth Ministries. He is the founder of the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership at Biola University in Los Angeles County. Prior to coming to Biola, Dan served for 18 years with Campus Crusade for Christ. Dan and his wife, Dee, live in La Habra, Calif. They have two grown daughters.