

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY?

By Howard V. Malmstadt

(The following is an excerpt from a chapel service given by Howard V. Malmstadt at Wheaton College, 1983.)

I am often asked, “What is a Christian University?” and “How is it different from other universities” First and foremost, I believe a Christian University is a people --- a people called by God, a people of eternal destiny.

They are typically a people from many locations, a people with various functions and responsibilities, but with a focus on the Creator of the universe. The buildings and the equipment are important – BUT people are the LIFE of a university. ALL the people associated directly or indirectly with the university are important. They include the students, the teaching and administrative staffs, the operational and maintenance staffs, and the families, friends, and associates of students and staff. These are the PEOPLE who ARE the UNIVERSITY.

When I was a professor at the University of Illinois I often asked my doctoral students, “ What would be a truly IDEAL solution for your research project?” Two years ago at a scientific conference, several of these former students, now some 20, 30 and even 40 years later reported that they are now close to the ideal answer to the question. They told me that the question about “the ideal” that I asked them to envision so many years ago for their areas of scientific research had been a catalyst and challenge for them to seek question, “what are the characteristics that would make an ideal “Christian University”? Let’s consider some of these characteristics:

1. The people, who are the university, would know God intimately, and their hearts would be on fire to make Him known.
2. The people would be committed and become engaged in the great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20.
3. The campus community would express the love of Jesus in numerous tangible ways. John 17:20-23
4. The people would work together in unity and would be a catalyst for unity in the Body of Christ. John 17:20-23
5. The people would be obedient to the Word of God.
6. The programs, course and activities would be inspired by the Holy Spirit and be designed to release God’s gifts of creativity in students and staff, AND the people groups they serve in

ministries.

And the list goes on and on. What would you add to the list?

Is it possible to reach the ideal?

Yes, I believe that it is, IF we seek diligently to remain open to impartation from our Creator.

I believe that our Lord, Jesus Christ, would say to us that He seeks for men, for women to develop Christian Universities for His purposes and by His Word. Men and women who will seek Him diligently in prayer, learning to count the cost to be able to influence the future. Ever closer to Him they will rejoice both when He confirms their thoughts, and when He shows them a better way. These men and women will commit to programs and ministries only to the extent that all contribute to building a people – a people called and taught of God, a people of destiny, a people who will fully play their part in bringing a great multitude before His throne. A great multitude, which no one can count from every nation, tribe. People and tongues, singing:

“Salvation to our God, Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”. The Nations will be therefore before Him, and He will teach them! Rev. 7:9-10

Until that day, He seeks for men, for women to follow His plans, including His plans for developing the University of the Nations and other Christian universities – true universities committed to His vision, His ways of teaching, of managing, of communicating, His ways of working together in community – in unity. A people, young and old committed and open to His commission, His empowerment to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Matthew 28:18-20.

If the task seems impossible, continue to read verse 20 in the above scripture, as Jesus says “—and surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Yes, He is with us, and he will guide toward the ideal.