

CRITICAL DISTINCTIVES OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

February 9, 2003
Dunlop, WVA Church of the Nazarene
E. LeBron Fairbanks

1. INTRODUCTION.

Letter from an alum:

Dear Dr. Fairbanks,

I doubt that you will remember me, but I just wanted to drop you a quick email. I graduated a couple of years ago and had several conversations with you about Theater and New York City, where I will finally move to so I can pursue a career in acting and writing. I never told you while I was a student at MVNC, but you were someone who I looked up to and considered to be a good Christian man. You spoke several times in Chapel of your upbringing and the type of Father that you had. It sounded like we had similar childhood's. I too had an abusive Father who took out his daily frustrations of life out on his children. Your speaking about your Father helped me to realize that the cycle does not have to repeat itself like many of the studies show. I believe all people that have childhood's like that have moments of weakness, in which a certain emotion can come back to haunt us, but for the most part, through God and others, we realize that the repetition of the acts can stop. It was my greatest fear that I someday would participate in the same acts of my father. I have married a wonderful woman. She is a great Christian and has helped me realize that I must forgive my father for his actions in order to move. I have forgiven my father, I don't like him. I have forgiven him.

I also wanted to tell you another way that you were "Jesus" to me. While I attended MVNC, I was not your typical Nazarene student. I enjoyed drinking, smoking, and other immoral acts that are against the Christian faith. Most of the people I came across at the college looked down upon me, because they knew that I participated in these acts. I was friends with other people like me, others that smoked and drank with me. During all that time, I could tell you had a genuine love for the students like me, and that was greatly appreciated. I wish I would have told you while I was still attending college, but everyone has those people in their lives that they look back upon and see them as instrumental people in their current walk with God. One of my biggest regrets in college is that I did not participate in more acts of service in the various activities that the college participates in. I wish I could do it all over again, but I can only start from this point on.

The reason I wanted to go to Mt. Vernon was because I grew up with R.... and J..... The three of us were best friends. They were Nazarene and I was Baptist. I did not want to go to college after high school, and they went off to the Naz. After the accident and J.... died, I signed to go to the Naz just because I wanted to be there for my best friend R....., for he was going through a rough time. It seems like I should have known the errors of alcohol then, but I still ignored the signs and stories, and became maybe the biggest drinker the Naz has ever seen. I even bartended my way through college and became friends with many people in the community.

After graduation I moved to Columbus, where I continued to bartend at some clubs and worked during the day. One night after bartending, I had a freak stroke. I was rushed to the hospital, and it looked like I could die. I could not move my mouth or think properly, but I knew that I had treated Jesus improperly. My girlfriend who later became my wife was constantly working on me to listen to my heart, and this experience gave us both opportunities to grow more together and towards the Lord. I laid in the hospital for 8 days unable to move the left side of my body, and my mind seemed to work in slow motion. There were times I just wanted to die. After being released, I had a lot of therapy to go through. It was during all of this that I realized that I had to get myself straight and listen to what God wanted with my life. And miraculously, I can move both sides of my body, and I am strong and healthy. No stroke related symptoms bother me anymore.

My wife and I got married last October, and I have never been closer to God. Now at the end of this month, she and I will be moving to New York City, where I will pursue acting and writing, and my wife will go to law school. Two places that are in desperate need of Christ. I look forward to the challenge now of fulfilling my duties for Christ, I just wish I would have done them sooner.

I guess I wanted to write this email for encouragement to you. I know it must be hard at times to see kids struggling with their Christian walk, but the only thing you can do for them is pray and continue to be an example. One of the biggest problems that I faced in college was constantly being judged, and I never felt that directed from you. Thank you Dr. Fairbanks for being an instrumental teacher in my Christian walk, even though you did not know it at the time. God Bless you, the campus, faculty, and all the students this school year,
In Him,

MVNU Graduate

1. MVNU provides the *integration of faith and learning* so that students are **prepared to be successful Christians** in a secular world. ⇒ **STORY**

2. MVNU provides a *faith community* that challenges students to develop **holistically**.
 - a. administrators, faculty, and staff actively care for and nurture students
 - b. one-to-one relationships
 - c. Community standards and behavior that shape Christ-likeness
 - d. Challenge to personal ministry calling ⇒ **STORY**

3. MVNU offers *relevant, challenging academic programs* that lead students to **excel in their career and life goals**.
 - a. Liberal-arts perspective
 - b. Excellent education
 - c. Personal interaction with faculty ⇒ **STORY**

4. MVNU offers an *excellent campus environment* to nurture **learning and growth**.
 - a. beautiful, spacious, and safe campus
 - b. wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities
 - c. opportunities to explore new areas of interest
 - d. international academic and service opportunities
 - e. development of deep, life-long friendships ⇒ **STORY**