



# THE WEEKLY MEETING OF CRU

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*"A community of students who want to experience God personally"*

Finally gathering up the courage to talk to his roommate about spiritual things, Josh asks his roommate Doug if he'd like to go to Cru with him sometime. Doug is unsure. He's heard about it. He knows that Josh regularly goes to it. He knows that it's a 'Christian thing.' But Doug is fuzzy on what goes on there. Naturally, Doug's next question is "What is Cru?" or the implied question, "Why do you go to Cru?" or more directly, "Why should I go to Cru?"

By the end of Josh's answer, Doug will have made a decision on whether to go to Cru or not. Yes, their relationship plays a part. Yes, Josh's attitude and lifestyle plays a role. But ultimately Doug will filter whatever Josh says through a simple value judgment: "Is it worth my time and energy to go to Cru?"

This conversation is important as we look at the weekly meeting of Cru because whatever happens at Cru each week will influence Josh's answer, and Josh's answer will influence Doug's decision. We'll take a look at why Cru has a weekly meeting and how the elements of the weekly meeting (like its emcee, its music, its talk, its reputation on campus) all encourage or discourage Doug from coming to Cru

and experiencing God personally.

## THE GOD-SHAPED NICHE

What does Cru have to compete with on campus? Granted, this is a college campus. Classes, food and homework need to be taken care of. Hopefully you haven't scheduled your Cru meeting during class times or when the cafeteria has its longest lines. More often than not, homework is a polite excuse for masking a deeper reason not to go. Sure, having to do homework this week is fine. But when your roommate plays video games for six hours a day and does homework only on Thursdays from 8pm to 9pm (which is "coincidentally" when Cru is scheduled) for the next fourteen weeks, then you might suspect something else is going on. How did you describe Cru to him?

When Josh provides an answer like "Cru is fun" what goes through Doug's head? "I can go to Cru, which is fun, or I can stay at home and have fun by...

...playing my X-Box "

... surfing the internet "

... checking my email "

... updating my MSN, . . . O"

... watching a movie

... IM'ing friends from home "

... checking my facebook "

...playing Sudoku

... playing Madden on the computer "

... going out drinking "

... picking up a girl at a party

... turning on the television

... hanging out with people down the hall "



So, what does Cru compete with? Staying home to watch a favorite show or jump on the computer will usually be more entertaining than whatever happens at Cru...although I've seen weekly meetings try and compete. In fact, in the 1980s Cru was often named "Prime Time" or "Thursday Night Live" - a reference to Saturday Night Live and their "Not Ready For Prime Time" skit actors. In a time before DVD players and watching videos on YouTube, this approach worked.

Yes, Cru should be a fun place to be. However, I wonder if "fun" will be the compelling reason for people to go. In business, companies understand their niche. They understand what they do and do well. McDonald's doesn't specialize in selling dishwashers. Lowe's doesn't cut hair and do manicures. Microsoft doesn't own acres of corn-producing land. Sure, McDonald's uses dishwashers, Lowe's employees get haircuts and Microsoft feeds children across the world with its philanthropic initiatives. But, if any of those companies lost its niche, it'd lose the backbone of its existence.

So, what Cru can offer that McDonald's, a fraternity party, an email account, an episode of "24" or a one-night stand can not offer? The answer is simple: *an experience of God*. Yes, when people come to Cru, humor will be used to lighten the mood, technological savvy gets a factor of coolness, and relationships will feed our need for community. But when roommate Doug hears Josh's answer that the primary reason he goes to Cru is because "I go there to experience God personally" he will know what Cru is all about and have his own desire to go. Our heart is that any person can come to Cru, no matter where they are spiritually, and take their next step with God.

Now, let's take a look at some of the elements of Cru that'll help Josh and Doug experience God personally when they come to Cru.

## CRU AND THE CULTURE

Jesus intimately knew his audience. He used farming terms to describe the Kingdom of God. Why? Because he was talking to farmers. His message was tailored specifically to address the questions of his crowd. How about us? Can we make some generalities about today's college students that'll help us understand their lives? What is it about Josh and Doug that is important to them?

First, everyone seems to be living busy lives, and that applies to college students as well. Life can be stressful with classes, part-time jobs, relationships to maintain, and, always, homework and papers to study for.

Second, people want to feel connected to whatever they participate in. Initially, they will ask, "Will I feel welcome?" and eventually "Do I belong with these people?" The strongest sense of belonging comes in the context of a community where a person knows others and is known by others.

Third, not only will it be important to connect with people at Cru, but what will people outside of Cru think? Today's students are savvy to hype and marketing techniques and quickly get to the bottom-line: Is this quality? A question they may ask themselves is, "What will others think of me if I go to Cru?" The quality of the meeting and its reputation around campus cannot be understated.

For Josh inviting Doug, a second question comes to mind "Will I be embarrassed inviting my roommates and classmates to attend Cru for this first time can sometimes be a nerve-wracking experience, especially when Jessica goes up front to play *Amazing Grace* on her kazoo for "special music"

Fourth, current statistics show that a lot of college freshmen don't regularly attend church. Yes, but did you know that many of them have never been to a church before? (Nationally, 65% of incoming freshmen) Imagine this from an outside perspective: people gather to sing songs to words on-screen while hearing a religious message in a secular university's classroom while praying to God in public. It may be confusing to them and require some explanations.

We've taken a quick look at some of the potential hurdles that someone may encounter as they go to Cru. But the end goal can still be accomplished - people connecting with God. We will just have to be sure to address some of these issues as we go.

## ENGAGING THE MASSES

Getting feedback on Cru is very valuable to me. I am excited when people take away something from the message. I know God is at work when people connect with Him through the worship. But when we lose focus on our objective of gathering people to have



them experience God more by doing silly things or stack up too many announcements or don't allow people to participate, then we lose the opportunity to have people see God.

**Time.** We need to be simple and focused in our use of time during the meeting. Since time is important to a busy person, we must be selective in what we schedule into the meeting. Anything that does not meet the objectives of the meeting should not be including in the meeting.

This also means that we start on-time and end on-time, as a respect to those who attend. Students may show up late once or twice, but if they know that the meeting starts right at 8pm, then 7:55pm for fifteen minutes all alone before others show up and something happens.

This is usually accomplished by planning extra preparation time before the meeting. Scheduling an on-time purposeful program is key to breaking down any time concerns.

**Connection.** Relationships are so important. Leaders (both students and staff) must be educated on the priority of making those connections at the meeting. A weekly meeting is not a place to "hang out" with your closest friends or other CCC leaders. It is a powerful place for relational ministry. Specifically it is a place to meet and establish connections with new people and make them feel comfortable. This will be a major factor in getting people to come back. Encourage leaders to know that they'll get together at another time to hang-out together.

Playing upbeat background music before and after the meeting (and ; = A4 42 refreshments) helps create a natural social environment. Another hint to reduce the relational barrier is to encourage people to come together in groups. Community Group leaders should accompany their people as they walk from the residence hall to the meeting. Too often we assume that they'll "just come" If our heart is to gather people, we need to be gathering. Encourage everyone to bring their hallmates, classmates, and friends. Encourage people to meet in their lobbies and walk together each week. And leaders shouldn't assume that just because they've accompanied their people once or twice that they're all set, especially as the semester goes on. People are more apt to come with someone than by

themselves.

(A side note to this is that, if possible, dorm Community Group leaders shouldn't "do double duty" by being a part of the weekly meeting team, where they need to be at the meeting early to setup and practice).

**Association.** The barrier of reputation is best reduced by making a quality meeting. If the students feel the meeting is a well thought-out and well-run meeting, then they will not have any problems attending, not have any problems telling others they attend, and not have any problems inviting others to attend with them. This involves being clear and purposeful in what we do, which we'll talk about in a second. But this also involves being well-prepared for each meeting.

Prayer and being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit is a huge part of the preparation for the meeting. Although God does work "off-the-cuff" 30, 7: blesses those who honor Him by ; @?ing the time and thought into what is done each week. Clear communication between the various elements of the meeting is a big way to ensure comfort among those involved in the meeting's operation. Coordination between the sound board, band, emcee, speaker, skit team, lights, projection, and any others must be tight. Last minute improvisation (whether due to lack of detailed scheduling or ad hoc additions) often destroys the sense of peace and comfort that other Weekly Meeting team members may have in executing their role.

Having a quality meeting means working as a team under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit to gather people and expect God to be there. It isn't a stage for one person to show off, but rather a time and place where students can meet with the true God in a real way. Any façade beyond will be recognized as fake and we'll lose our opportunity to have students encounter God.

**Gathering.** The last barrier is the program itself. Selection and execution of the various elements of the weekly meeting is the area that those involved with the weekly meeting have the most control over, yet often takes the most work. I believe the meeting can be a time for both followers of Christ and those who are still deciding. The goal of the program is to be purposeful in having students encounter God during their time at the weekly meeting without unnecessary



distractions.

Addressing the diversity of everyone's church background will be paramount. I do not believe this means that the meeting should cater to the lowest common denominator of spirituality. But we can be clear about everything that happens by explaining what is going on to those who are unfamiliar. As I mentioned about the statistics of this generation's lack of church attendance, it is sometimes best to think of the weekly meeting as a class entitled, "Introduction to Church 101". Although Campus Crusade for Christ is not a church, it might be some people's only exposure to something even remotely Church-like; and as such we have a responsibility to be as available as possible to a connection to God for all comers.

## ELEMENTS

Let's take a look at some of the various parts of the weekly meeting and how we need to be purposeful in what we do – focused on leading people to encounter God and clear in explaining that.

**Atmosphere.** First impressions are already being made before the meeting even starts. Is there a buzz of excitement and anticipation in the air? Is there a freedom to be social and relaxed? Two main components add or subtract to the overall pre-meeting atmosphere.

The first interaction is with the greeters. Greeters are very important. They are more than "the people who hand out stuff" They may be the first personal interaction with someone from Campus Crusade for Christ. Even if there is nothing to hand out, there should be someone at the door to say, "Welcome to Cru" with a warm greeting – especially if we're serious about being a ministry of loving people.

In order to build momentum, we usually have everyone gather outside the meeting room before opening the doors. This allows the tech team, band and emcees to set-up without distraction. Also, the worship band (who usually prefers to pray before the meeting) can pray behind closed doors so as to not freak out non-Church-going first-timers to Cru. It also creates a fervor as the doors open with music playing and people rushing in and socializing.

The second component is creating a relaxed social atmosphere. In order to achieve this, those involved

with the execution of the weekly meeting need to be finished setting up at least fifteen minutes prior to the meeting's start. The band should feel free to roam and meet people. The emcee and speaker should be finished with their sound checks. Background music helps people socialize by breaking the silence. Upbeat background music helps create a sense of anticipation. Not having people "running around, still doing stuff" helps everyone (especially those who are new) feel calm and relaxed.

**Opening.** We already talked about starting on-time. But a good opening will mean people won't want to miss the beginning. Ineffective is someone saying, "Hey, we're gonna start now". With everyone hanging around, you want something that'll make people find a seat and start paying attention. A patent way of doing this is turning the lights down and having a 1-minute video about the weekly meeting, then starting with the worship. Other effective ways I've seen are a lively and humorous 2-3 minute skit, performance dancing... creativity can be let loose.

**Welcome and Introduction to Cru.** Following the opener, everyone should be welcomed. It should be really simple but full of energy and excitement? "Welcome to Cru – the weekly meeting of Campus Crusade for Christ. We're glad you're here" This is also a good place to explain Cru. "Cru is a community of students here at \_\_\_\_\_ who want to experience God personally" By saying this to begin with, people will come to expect God to be part of the program. And every once in a while it's good to throw in the heart of Cru "Our hope is that no matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you'll be able to take your next step with God here" By saying these things up-front, it'll reinforce the purpose of them being there to everyone, from the freshmen to the older students.

This is also an important time for the emcee to introduce himself. Even if you think everyone already knows you, there may be one person who doesn't – and we don't want to alienate that one person. "Hi, I'm Dave and I'm a junior majoring in mechanical engineering" A personal story or some kind of rant is always good because the goal is to have everyone identify with the emcee. It's vital that people can see themselves being there and not feel out of place. A lot of people will say they are similar to "the people at Cru" based upon whether they are similar to the emcee.

**Music Disclaimer.** The music disclaimer allows



people to participate as they are comfortable and avoids commanding the crowd to do something (like “Everyone stand up”) So, before the music, someone should say something like, “We’re gonna sing some songs right now. Feel free to sing along, sit down, stand up, or just kick back and enjoy the music. This is just a way of expressing our heart to God” This simple disclaimer creates an atmosphere of inclusiveness by being sensitive to the variety of backgrounds.

It’s important to make sure each vocalist in the band understands this. When I’ve seen the crowd deep in contemplative worship, I’ve seen overeager vocalists distract by trying to get everyone clapping or all stand up, when the crowd is comfortable worshipping Him as they are.

**Opening Worship.** Music can contribute a lot to a meeting and to encountering God during that time. We’ll talk more about the emotional flow of a weekly meeting after we talk about the individual elements. But for now, we’ll suffice to mention that the music must be of good quality. It is better to have no music than lousy music. Ideally you’ll want a full band with drums, lead guitar and bass. Be patient as it takes time to assemble the talent. Let talent attract talent.

But one aspect of worship must be mentioned. Concerning the vocals, it is important to have worship leaders, not performers. A worship vocal leader is someone that the masses can follow musically. The worship leader will stick to the melody without hard-to-sing harmonies. Background vocals, =Oexcellent for adding harmony and counter-melodies, but the leader’s main concern is the ability of the gathered masses to focus on encountering God and not the singing. You can also figure out if you have a worship leader by trying to sing along with them. If they are coming into the note a split second before you, they are leading. If they drag behind the normal place for the word to come in, then they are just singing (or even worst, trying to perform)! A worship leader will get the note out there early so that the crowd will come in at just the right beat.

Ideally, you’ll want both a male and female worship leader. This is important to have a lower voice so the men can sing along too. One of the biggest mistakes to the flow of emotion and energy during the meeting is “dead air” If you have the band up front, they should sneak up quietly while the emcee is talking or the speaker is praying. The band should be up front ahead of time. They should refrain from commentary

between songs (more on this later with regard to people “doing business with God”) and refrain from having long silent transitions between songs.

One of : @-best moves was to put the worship band to 730side or even in the back of the room. While removi92 the stigma of a “concert” for those worshipping, the worship band has found it easier to focus on worshipping God and struggle less with being performers. In addition, with some sound coming from behind people’s heads, we have found that they are more inclined to sing louder. This move has garnered a positive response from many involved with the weekly meeting.

**Emcee.** The emcee plays a critical role in a quality weekly meeting. In many ways, he becomes the “human face” of Cru on campus. The emcee is the representative of the ministry. As a result, the emcee should lead a godly life and be involved in a personal ministry of evangelism and discipleship. He should be presentable each week – dressing nicely but not overdressed (no ties, but no sloppy t-shirts either). The emcee becomes the de facto embodiment of 730 movement.

The emcee should welcome everyone and then introduce himself simply each week, “Welcome to Cru – a group of students seeking to experience God. My name is Joe Smith and I am a major in elementary education here at Western Michigan” Then it’s ideal to tell a short story. Again, the purpose of the short story (usually humorous and noncontroversial) is to have the audience identify with the emcee (i.e. taking a midterm, shopping for books, forgetting a class). In a meeting where abnormal things occur (public singing and religious talk), it is important that the students see a “regular student” up front.

**Warning:** be careful in “polling the crowd” “Who went to Christmas Conference last year?” “Who loved our speaker last week?” “Who’s a freshmen?” Asking the crowd to respond with a show of hands or applause does two things which are not helpful. First, it separates the “involved” from the “uninvolved” which is not in line with the purpose of gathering people during the weekly meeting no matter what their spiritual background. Second, you run the risk of an unfavorable response (i.e. “Who saw such-and-such television show last night?” And only 5% of the crowd raises their hand). I’d recommend only polling when there is a going to be an assured 90% approval rate (i.e. “Who likes pizza?”) or something mundane,





(i.e. “Who slept during class this week? I did...”).

This is a good opportunity to talk about the words we speak from the front. First of all, it is imperative that everyone who talks uses a microphone. Using a microphone allows people to talk slower and use better diction to be better understood. But beyond sound considerations, it’s important to use words that are accessible to all. We don’t want to have “in” people and “out” people, as if we’re a clique. Using inside jokes or name-dropping of people in the crowd only alienates people who are attending their first meeting. In addition, we should avoid unexplained and overtly Christian and CCC jargon. What does “share” mean anyway? What is a “contact ” Who are “my guys” or “my women ” “Sanctification” or “Community Groups” are good only if they are defined. Use real words that real people can understand.

Overall, the role of the emcee during the weekly meeting is to serve as an identifiable thread throughout the meeting. He serves as the narrative point of view for what happens. Introducing several things at once creates a better flow and saves time. He’s not a play-by-play guy, but rather someone confident to articulate the role of “host ” creating an atmosphere of friendliness and clarity.

### Words/Phrases To Clarify

Testimony  
 Blood of Christ  
 Share Jesus  
 Witness  
 New Testament  
 Gospel  
 Grace  
 Faith  
 Christian  
 Mercy  
 Righteousness  
 Justification  
 Sanctification  
 Spirit-Filled Life  
 The Word  
 The Lord  
 Saved  
 Accepted Christ  
 Evangelism  
 Discipleship  
 Fellowship  
 On Staff

### Words/Phrases To Avoid

Conservative  
 Liberal  
 Democrat  
 Republican  
 Revelations  
 Evangelical  
 The Lost  
 Special Music  
 Born-Again  
 Bible Study  
 Crusade  
 Crusader  
 Campus Crusades

**Announcements.** A difficult question each week is how to deal with the promotion of activities. Focusing on the purpose of gathering people to experience God, announcements often distract us. The goal is to minimize their upfront time. It is not our responsibility to let everyone know about everything that’s happening on planet Earth this week. A newspaper-style hand-out by the greeters will handle the bulk of them. Any announcements that serve the movement as a whole (parties, retreats, conferences) can be done as commercials, and , =Obetter done ?3= @23a testimony or skit rather than a monologue : =dialogue. Our goal is often to verbally say only one announcement per week from up-front.

**Testimony.** Testimonies are a great way to bring variety to the meeting, involving more people up front, and contributing to the sense of personal realness. All testimonies should be no longer than three minutes and should be well-rehearsed. Testimonies that tell a compelling story are best. All testimonies should be screened and reviewed in advance of the meeting. Again, avoid overtly Christian or CCC jargon and the emcee should be careful not to introduce them using the words “testimony ” or “share ” Stories could include how someone came to Christ, how they encountered God this week, or their experience at a retreat or conference. A simple emcee transition following these testimonies is “%thank you, Bil7”

Also, having a prepared testimony creates the same community feel that would otherwise occur through an “open mike ” sharing >3: =?>? =4s about what the Lord is doing in your life. Through open mikes, it is hard to prepare everyone for the weekly meeting’s purpose of explaining everything that they say, require focusing on experiencing God, and avoiding jargon.

**Getting to Know You.** As the weekly meeting



serves as the front door to many to our ministry, it is important to be able to know who attended and follow them up during the week. Do not ever call them “visitors” This distances them from the group and makes them feel like outsiders. Those who are “here for the first time” should receive a comment card to fill out. Mention that at the end there will be a drawing for a prize. The prize could be a CD, free pizza, money off a retreat or conference, a gift certificate or whatever. Again, not wanting to poll the crowd and make first-timers uncomfortable by raising their hand, it’s better to have everyone receive the comment card or combine it with a tear-off with the announcements sheet. Here’s a sample script for the emcee “I’d like to extend a special welcome to those who are here for the first time. We’d love to find out what you thought about tonight, so if you tear off and fill out the comment card, we’ll be doing a drawing at the end of the meeting for a free pizza ”

If possible, it’s even better to collect the “Cru Cards” from everyone. That way, those at Cru for the first time, simply check off a box and turn them in just like everyone around them. Our older students are motivated to turn the cards in because we usually have a drawing for a prize (or more precisely, to be involved in a game we call “Box or Dollar” that happens each week... a game where the contestant chooses between a dollar bill or the mystery box – which sometimes contains a cool prize or sometimes contains lame stuff like the school newspaper and a broken pencil.

I would also avoid imitating some churches in having students turn and “greet” the person next to you. This comes off as contrived and awkward. We want an atmosphere of genuine friendliness, not an air of “someone made me talk to you” It’s much better to have social background music afterwards, ending on-time to allow time to hang-out afterwards, or perhaps inviting everyone out afterwards for pizza or dessert. It’s hard to have real conversations and develop real relationships in two minutes.

One big way of making sure people get to know each other is to have signs around the room during the first few meetings of the year with various affinity groups. After the meeting, we encourage students to gather together based on living location. “Valley #1” in this corner. “Bigelow Hall” in this corner. This way, people will gravitate to people they live with. This will also be a great time when Community Group leaders can connect to the people around them.

**Drama.** A skit is a useful tool to address a topic. A well-done drama should raise the issue to be addressed – not to preach or answer the questions. Theatre is a live medium and generally elicits a greater audience response than a more passive media such as video. I am a fan of technology as much as the next guy, but there is something powerful about seeing it before my eyes that this generation has not become accustomed to (as with television and movies).

For humor: don’t stress about perfection as with more dramatic skits. In a generation of unedited reality television, it’s fun to see people (especially those who appear in skits week after week) mess up. There’s something real about forgetting lines, though I’d recommend not trying to do this intentionally.

**Speaker.** The talk is the major teaching platform. The purpose of this article is not to address public speaking issues, so I won’t focus on that. However, it is recommended to limit the time to twenty to twenty-five minutes. I would recommend teaching on bigger doctrinal topics – answering questions such as “Who’s in charge?” “Jesus” and “His Word” and making application from there. More duty-orientated issues are better communicated in Community Groups or one-on-one times.

**Reflective Music.** A performed solo immediately after the talk can be a great way to cement home the application of the talk. However, the song must begin without introduction in order to keep the mood. The singer must not talk either. Often times when the singer or worship leader talks they comment on how the speaker spoke to their lives, but to assume that is how God spoke to everyone’s lives in a similar way is self-centered. The post-talk music allows individuals to think about what God is saying to them individually. Speaking beforehand usually distracts our thoughts away from what God’s Word brought forth in people’s souls. If we’re serious about people experiencing God during the weekly meeting, this cannot be overstated.

To keep the flow, it is good to have the band sneak up while the speaker is praying to close. If there is no special music, then the band would do well to sing one or two slower, more reflective songs. To prevent distraction from prayer, it is important to have the band sneak from their seats upfront. Having the band sit in the back and then walk up or tune or talk will cause much distraction from experiencing God through prayer.



**Ending.** After the reflective music, the emcee should thank the speaker simply, “Thank you Bill for bringing us closer to God” (or some wide-sweeping statement). Again, commenting on the particulars of what he said is risking not being all-encompassing of how God may have moved during the meeting. Then the emcee should have the greeters quickly collect the comment cards and give away the prize. Then it is important to end simply by inviting everyone back the next week or inviting them to get to know people by staying or going out somewhere.

Another tendency that is questionable is to thank the band after each time they play. Usually this just shows that the emcee doesn’t know how to drive the meeting forward while confusing the purpose of the worship band. The worship band isn’t there for concert. The band knows that. They are to be appreciated another time, but not to the distraction of the purpose of the meeting; that is, to have a student encounter God. The emcee shouldn’t worry about publicly thanking the worship band.

**Closing Worship.** Again, allow people to feel free to express themselves to God in their own way. (Because the most common [but demeaning] transition to closing worship is a worship leader commanding “Ok, everybody, stand up!”) Rather, allow God to flow in and through individuals to lead them on their own to praise God. But at the end it’s usually best to portray the hope that we have in Christ by having an upbeat and lively ending. And immediately after the last song of the worship leader should say, “Thanks for coming! See ya next week!” When the lights go out, the emcee should say, “We’ll see you next week!”

**Connections outside Cru.** A more free-flowing social activity would ideally follow Cru, like going together to a coffee shop, party or karaoke somewhere. Ideally, whatever prize given to those here for the first time would coincide with it (i.e. a free pizza at the Pizza Place that we’ll all go to afterwards).

#### A Quick Note on Scheduling Before the Meeting

A pre-meeting schedule allows a sense of peace and focus before leading others to God. One of the biggest tendencies to deviating from this schedule is usually the worship team trying to get in a “practice session” during their sound check. This normally results in an undesirable chain of events. First, a practice session implies that the worship team is not ready and makes the worship team members feel confident in

what they are about to do. Second, the Sound Engineer is usually squeezed out from having access to the band because the worship team leader is busy running practice. This often results in unnecessary buzzes and crackles during worship as well as unregulated levels where one vocalist is too loud and the guitar is too low and not going through the monitor or whatever technological ailment occurs. Next, the Worship Team Leader has to be asked to get off the stage by the Weekly Meeting Coordinator. This results in a clash of values. The Worship Team Leader says to himself, “Does the Weekly Meeting Coordinator know that worship is important? That we need to practice and get this right?” and the Weekly Meeting Coordinator thinks, “Does the Worship team know how important it is to have everything set up for the meeting? Or else, we’ll have so many technical difficulties that worship won’t even happen.” Also, the Worship Team goes into prayer with a tension against the Weekly Meeting Coordinator, which doesn’t help in prayer nor leading in worship. With practice going long, prayer extends into the time when people begin showing up to Cru. At worst, the worship team is praying up front as the un-churched walk in – freaking them out. At best, the worship band is absent from being able to interact personally with the people they are about to lead in worship – getting a feel for how people are doing and missing out on ministering one-on-one with others. And lastly, Cru gets started and the worship band is stuck in the back of the room for seats without interrupting the meeting, either at the beginning to get their seats up front or just before they play when they get up from their seats during some of the most contemplative moments of the evening.

## EXPERIENCE GOD PERSONALLY

Overall, each element is not an end of itself, but rather serves to the end purpose of gathering students to experience more of God. From its beginning to its ending, Cru needs to bring each individual closer on their path with Jesus.

However, it is important to note that the weekly meeting isn’t simply a class. It isn’t merely an activity to put more knowledge of God in people’s heads. But rather, there is also an emotional element to the meeting as a whole. This is an important factor that must be addressed in both the planning and execution of the meeting.

As we select the topics for the speaker to the emcee’s stories and from the tone of the skit to the selection





of songs, all must be in harmony to create a holistic encounter with God. It is confusing and manipulative to jerk people's hearts around from upbeat and lively one minute to somber and heavy the next minute. Ideally, the planner of the meeting should not just recognize what happens time-wise and element-wise, but also how each element flows in the overall emotion of that week's meeting. And, everyone (from the emcee to the speaker to the worship leader) should be on-board with the flow. There is a time for high energy and a time for reflection. #, 9/: 8 **D8 492** **30B**: quenches the Spirit of God to do business **B 43** Q . 3person.

## BREAKING MOLDS

I must also mention that these elements need not necessarily happen in the order presented in this article. Feel free to mix them up and experiment with different orders according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, but recognize that there needs to be an emotional flow to the meeting that is essential to the overall experience of God during the weekly meeting.

I would encourage you to be creative. This isn't Sunday Morning Church where old folks are gonna freak out if the sermon doesn't follow the worship. In fact, having the talk lead into the bulk of worship as a response to the talk has been one of our most well-received patterns. We've also tried splitting the talk by worship, and splitting the worship by the talk. We've had Discussion Groups in lieu of the talk and had optional workshops and seminars going on in multiple rooms around the main worship room. There are no limits to what it means to experience God personally – and as long as you stick to the principle of **307 492** ; Q ; **D**encounte=, 9/ **OC** ; **O-49**. **Ofo>@** ' **3-4**? **D @77** be blessed.

I also recommend experimenting with set-up of the physical room. Why does everything always have to be "up-front" ? Why can't a skit happen in the middle of the room? Why can't the worship band be put in the back and face the front with the rest of the crowd? Why must we set up like a classroom or row of pews? Why not like a dinner with tables? Why not in circles of chairs for discussion? Why not sit on the floor?

We've also had different rooms host different activities that people opted to attend throughout the Cru meeting. Worship in one room. Someone giving a talk at various times in another room. Question & Answer time in another area. Prayer in another area.

Small Groups going on in the foyer. An interactive "station" off to the side. It takes a lot of planning, but if it's well-executed students will encounter God in creative and dynamic ways.

Everyone will take away from the meeting a different experience. We must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit not to invade others' encounter with God. Remember, even those involved with the ministry of the meeting will be encountering God through the meeting, and thus will have a different experience than those who merely attend.

## PRAYER

For those of you who will help plan, prepare and execute the weekly meeting, I pray that you'll experience God working through you each week – even when everything falls apart and "goes wrong" – that you'll see how God uses it for His own good. Something powerfully divine happens when people are gathered together for Him. When this is our goal He , **B** , **D**-show>up.

For those of you, like Josh who invited Doug, who will use the weekly meeting to enhance your own ministry on campus, I pray that as you invite and accompany friends from Community Groups and others on campus that you'll be confident that each person you bring will take another step in their journey with God while having to not worry about the "cringe factor" (where something happens up front that embarrass you and you'll have to explain later). I hope the meeting will spur conversations that will lead people to Christ and have them grow in faith.

Finally, prayer for those involved with the meeting is so important. You may want to consider a dedicated team of a few prayer warriors who are committed to the ministry of Cru on campus %**30>0**; Q ; **D>3** @7 neither involved with the execution of the meeting nor involved with bringing their Community Groups to the meeting to pray during the meeting. God wants to make Himself known on campus, and I hope this vision of Cru's weekly meeting as a tool for students ? experience more : 1~ : / **4-Q 740/ 49D @-8** : **A08 09?**