

## Six Key Values of DC/LA '97

It should be observed at the outset that students attending DC/LA '97 were heavily invested in the kind of behavioral disciplines one would expect to see connected with this value. As was true for those students involved with DC/LA '94, church attendance and Bible reading were not only high, but they were excellent predictors of the kind of young person who is most likely to engage in evangelism-related behaviors most often.

*Attend church*--More specifically, about 57% of students report that they attend church "a few times a week" or more; those students were likely to engage in each of the following behaviors significantly more often than other students: read the Bible on their own, hang out with church friends, memorize scripture, pray for opportunities to tell someone about Jesus, pray for one particular friend to become a Christian, pray with others for specific friends to become Christians, recruit others for evangelistic prayer efforts, invite non-Christians to activities where they'll learn about Jesus, invite them to join a small group to learn about Jesus, invite them to talk to themselves about Jesus, invite them to talk to an adult about Jesus, help plan events where non-Christians can hear about Jesus, share personal testimony with non-Christian friends, explain to friends how they can begin a relationship with Jesus, pray with friends when they ask Jesus into their lives, and been coached or trained by an adult in evangelism. The only effects from the original survey not found at all for church attendance patterns were hanging out with non-Christian friends and doing some things just to build friendships with non-Christians. In fact, these frequent church attendees were also likely to display a significantly higher frequency of participating in small groups for encouragement & accountability, praying with friends for courage, opening themselves honestly to Christian friends, discovering personal needs of non-Christians and participating in small group Bible studies. It was also more likely to be true that they had made a commitment to God to maintain their sexual purity before coming to the conference, that they were meeting regularly with friends who help them *Live the Life*, and that they were willing to go into full-time ministry if God wants. *The 51% of students who report that they read the Bible on their own a few times per week (or more) followed the same patterns as those preceding.*

At DC/LA '94 approximately 2 out of every 3 students reported that they had "made a commitment to God that is still important to the way I try to live every day." With the current survey students were allowed to discriminate whether such a commitment was true **before** DC/LA or **since** DC/LA. While 64% indicated that it was true before the conference, another 32% indicated that such a commitment had been made since (as a result of?) DC/LA. At any rate, those students for whom such a commitment is true were significantly more likely to display higher frequency of almost all of the surveyed evangelism-related behaviors. Only for hanging out with non-Christian friends, doing some things just to build friendships with non-Christians, opening themselves honestly to non-Christian friends, and visiting the DC/LA '97 internet web site were there no effects.

A similar pattern was found for students who indicated that they "made a commitment to God to have a daily personal quiet time." 36% of students had already made such a commitment before DC/LA; they were joined in their commitment by 45% others who made such a decision since the conference. Only for the following behaviors were there no effects found: hanging out with non-Christian friends, doing some things just to build friendships with non-Christians, opening themselves honestly to non-Christian friends, and inviting others to small groups where they'll learn about Jesus. Note that those who had made such a commitment since the conference were significantly more likely to visit the internet web site provided, presumably because of the assistance offered for quiet times on-line.

Insofar as the research design is limited by its self-reporting nature, it is very supportive of the conclusion that DC/LA '97 made a significant contribution in helping a large percentage of it's students to depend on Jesus. Some took important first steps toward that end; others were strengthened in the resolve they brought to the events. Consider some other items supporting this conclusion. Since DC/LA 48% of the students say they know how to have an effective personal prayer & Bible study time (joining the 41% for whom this was true prior to the event), 42 % say they are willing to go into full time ministry if God wants (joining the 41% for whom this was true prior to the event), and 54% report that they use a journal or notebook during their quiet times at least once a week. Finally, the extremely strong prayer patterns of respondents also suggests that the value of *depending on Jesus* was caught by students.

One of the most innovative contributions of the DC/LA '97 evangelism training was its emphasis upon the efficacy and value of being real in relationships with others, especially non-Christian friends. There are three different items that were phrased to catch the effects of this value among those surveyed.

First is the report on the frequency of behaviors among non-Christians; 44% indicate that more than once a week they "open themselves honestly to a non-Christian friend." That percentage swells to 70% when the frequency range is expanded to include those who indicate that they engage in such an activity about once a month.

Second is the parallel item related to Christian friends. 65% indicate that more than once a week they "open themselves honestly to a Christian friend", and that number grows to 84% when the response range includes those who say they do this about monthly.

But how can we know if these healthy patterns are attributable to DC/LA's training emphasis rather than patterns in which students would naturally engage? The third item offers a clue to this. 61% of students said that it was true for them before DC/LA that they are "honest & open with both Christians and non-Christians;" 32% reported that this became true for them since the conference. For the students who report this to be true in their life--either before or since DC/LA--a significantly higher frequency of evangelism-related behaviors is reported for 28 of the 32 items surveyed. No effects--or differences--were found among students with regard to their church attendance patterns or doing things just to build relationships with non-Christians.

Two other effects differed from the normal predictable pattern. First, the 7% who indicated that it was not true for them (that they were honest & open...) were likely to hang out with non-Christian friends significantly more often than was the pattern for those who reported such an approach to relationships was true for them (more than once a day vs. a few times a week). This finding merits some careful reflection in order to understand its implications. One explanation may be that this small percentage of students is committed to hanging out with their friends without any redemptive agenda whatsoever. There may be alternative explanations.

Another item deviating from the normal pattern indicated that those who had come to embrace the value of honest and open relationships since DC/LA '97 were likely to have visited the DC/LA '97 internet web site significantly more often than were those who held this value before the conference. Admittedly, it may not be fair to characterize this particular item as an "evangelism-related behavior," but it does provide some useful feedback to conference planners with regard to the use of technology in accomplishing their goals.

Better than one third of those attending DC/LA '97 (39%) had never committed themselves to the value of being honest and open with their friends. The training conference--with its clear emphasis on *being real*--helped 82% of these students own this value in their lives.

While this DC/LA '97 training value was of elevated importance at the event, it was, regrettably, perhaps the least easily measured by the current research design. Tangible giving responses through Compassion, International are excellent indicators of one expression of this value. This concrete behavior-as-indicator is supported by the response to the item where 42% of students indicated that *since* DC/LA they had made a commitment to God to give their time and money to others (these students joined the other 43% who had made such a commitment prior to attending the conference).

It may be that the impact of this value can be explored by considering another item. 48% of students surveyed after the conference indicated that--at a frequency of once a week or more--they "discover personal needs that a non-Christian friend has." An additional 27%, or 75% of the entire population, engage in this activity monthly or more.

Finally, while "gutsy acts" were largely connected in DC/LA '97 training to the **have courage** value, the integration of the training suggests that it was appropriate to create a blended item. 35% of students reported that they "perform a gutsy act of loving service for a non-Christian" more than once a week. Another 34% do this monthly. These 69% who are gutsy at least monthly are likely to engage in each of the following evangelism-related behaviors significantly more often than those who reported that they seldom or never perform gutsy acts of loving service: read the Bible, memorize scripture, do things to build friendships with non-Christians, pray for opportunities to tell someone about Jesus, pray for one particular friend to become a Christian, pray with others for specific friends to become Christians, recruit others for evangelistic prayer efforts, invite non-Christians to activities where they'll learn about Jesus, invite them to join a small group to learn about Jesus, invite them to talk to themselves about Jesus, invite them to talk to an adult about Jesus, help plan events where non-Christians can hear about Jesus, share personal testimony with non-Christian friends, explain to friends how they can begin a relationship with Jesus, pray with friends when they ask Jesus into their lives, and been coached or trained by an adult in evangelism. They also share their rescue story more often (less than once a month), meet in a small group for accountability and encouragement more often (slightly less than weekly), open themselves honestly to non-Christians more often (slightly less than weekly), meet with an adult for accountability and encouragement more often (slightly less than weekly), pray with friends for courage more often (slightly less than weekly), open themselves honestly to Christian friends more often (more than weekly), pray and use a journal more often (slightly more than weekly), discover the personal needs of a non-Christian more often (weekly), overcome particular fears to talk to someone about Jesus more often (slightly less than to more than monthly), and participate in small group Bible studies more often (slightly less than weekly).

Two of the strongest patterns were related to personal sharing activities. Those who perform gutsy acts a few times a week or more (13%) also report that they invite others to talk with them about Jesus weekly or slightly less. This is significantly different than those who perform gutsy acts weekly or less, who also report that they invite others to talk with them about Jesus monthly or less. Some of these same persons at the highest end of performing gutsy acts also explain how to begin a relationship with Jesus at a rate of nearly once a month. Sowing invitations frequently yields a greater harvest of opportunities where the gospel can be more fully explained.

The only effects from the survey not found at all for these patterns of gutsy acts of loving service were hanging out with non-Christian friends and attending church. Those who perform gutsy acts almost daily (4% of students) even visited the internet web site significantly more often than did those who seldom perform such acts (25% of the students).

Choosing to challenge students to perform gutsy acts was clearly a creative and effective vehicle in the DC/LA '97 training. This tangible activity is an excellent predictor of other evangelism-related behaviors and a fair indicator that students caught the *love others* emphasis in the teaching.

No DC/LA '97 training value was as well measured by the current research design as was the emphasis on sharing the gospel. To evaluate the data related to this value 6 different items will be scrutinized. Three offer an indication of what students felt they learned; another two help us see what kind of motivation or commitment effects there are related to sharing the gospel, and a final item even seeks to discover how often students are actually sharing their own personal rescue story.

What was learned? Well, 81% of respondents indicate that they are "able to share their own personal rescue story at any time"; 44% report that this is only true **since** DC/LA. Fully 94% of attendees say that they "have learned how to share their faith with others", and 60% of them learned this essential ability at the '97 conferences. Perhaps most exciting, while 16% of students said they had "a plan for sharing my faith with my friends" before DC/LA '97, an additional 62% of them say that this is now true for them...**since DC/LA!** To add to the strength of this finding, those who indicate that they can now share their personal rescue story at any time and those who say they now have a plan for sharing their faith with their friends follow the exact same pattern of displaying 30 of the 32 evangelism-related behaviors significantly more often than do those who indicate that these statements are not true for them. Only "hanging out with non-Christians" and "doing things to build friendships with non-Christians" reveal no significant differences between those who have learned a plan/are able to share and those for whom this is not true. There is also, once again, a nice "internet" effect, indicating that those who learned to share their personal rescue story or to have a plan for sharing their faith at DC/LA '97 are more likely to visit the web site than either those who already had such knowledge or those who don't. **It's accurate to say that a majority of DC/LA '97 students learned how to share the gospel such that their evangelism practices have been increased significantly.**

What sort of difference did DC/LA '97 make on the commitments of students to share their faith? As was true for DC/LA '94 (it seems to be one of the things large conferences are best equipped to do), the impact in this area is profound. Consider the following data. While 60% of students came to the summer conferences already "convinced that I need to share my faith with others", virtually the rest of the attendees joined them in that conviction (36% report that this is true since DC/LA). Even more astoundingly, 74% of students reported that they "made a commitment to God to share my faith more often" since DC/LA. This sizable majority also display a significantly higher frequency of each evangelism-related behavior contained in the survey, with two exceptions. They don't attend church anymore often than others and they don't hang out with non-Christian friends any more often than do others. **Three out of four students attending DC/LA '97 made a commitment to share their faith more often; as a result their evangelism practices have increased significantly.**

This news of increased activity with regard to sharing the gospel is welcome, indeed. Progress and growth is all that can be asked for. Yet consideration of one particular item serves as a sobering reminder that there is more to be done in evangelism training. When asked how regularly they have shared their personal rescue story since DC/LA '97, only 34% of students report doing this about once a month or more. 49% say it seldom happens. Insofar as these surveys came 4 and 9 months after the event, it may be that the process has not yet yielded opportunity to share. As was reported earlier (see Time & Place results), there is an indication that students are doing more of this kind of talking & sharing as time goes on. **Future conferences would do well to continue to strengthen the concrete and immediate bridges between what students learn, the commitments they make, and their evangelism-related behaviors.**

A number of different items in the research survey are useful in assessing how well the strategic value of getting connected with other believers was caught by conference attendees. Positive indications can be derived from the fact that 70% of students meet in small groups for encouragement and accountability once a week or more. An additional 13% meet like this monthly. It may be that the group also engages in Bible study at this time, since these numbers (72% and 12%) almost exactly mirror the percentages described above about small groups. 59% of conference participants reported that they learned "how a team can work together to reach a campus for Jesus Christ" since the summer events, joining the 32% who indicated that they already understood this key connectivity concept prior to DC/LA '97.

True learning is always measured by some sort of change, and behavioral indicators are most accurate at helping us understand how far-reaching the learning has been. Even though a specific strategy for getting connected was introduced at DC/LA '97, 47% of the students reported that it was true that they "meet regularly with a group of friends who help me to *Live the Life*" before the summer conferences. An additional 38% of students joined in on this specific strategy since DC/LA, pointing to 85% of students employing this method of getting connected. Those who do this also report significantly more frequent evangelism-related behaviors for 30 of the 32 items. Again, those who meet do not differ from those who don't meet in such groups when it comes to hanging out with non-Christian friends or doing things to build friendships with non-Christians.

An additional insight, one that has important implications for adult roles with young people, surfaces with the observation that the 54% of students who meet weekly or more with an adult for encouragement and accountability display evangelism-related behaviors significantly more often than do those who meet seldom or, in most cases, monthly. Only church attendance, visiting the internet web site, and the two behaviors excluded above (hanging out with non-Christian friends or doing things to build friendships with non-Christians) were unaffected. This finding parallels another strong finding that has emerged from Link Institute's National Student Leadership Research Project (1998), supporting the claim that **the more frequently an adult meets with a student for encouragement and accountability (individually or in a small group), the greater the increase in that student's evangelistic activity and effectiveness.**

This may also be the place to report findings related to one specific strategy of connection promoted at DC/LA '97. While there isn't an indication of great traffic visiting the internet web site (61% have never done it, 21% have seldom done it, 12% do it monthly, and only 5-6% do it weekly or more), those who have visited the web site more frequently also engage in some evangelism-related behaviors more often. To be specific, they read their Bible more often, memorize scripture more often, pray for opportunities to tell someone about Jesus, pray for one particular friend to become a Christian, pray with others for specific friends to become Christians, recruit others for evangelistic prayer efforts, invite non-Christians to activities where they'll learn about Jesus, invite them to join a small group to learn about Jesus, invite them to talk to themselves about Jesus, invite them to talk to an adult about Jesus, help plan events where non-Christians can hear about Jesus, share personal testimony with non-Christian friends, explain to friends how they can begin a relationship with Jesus, pray with friends when they ask Jesus into their lives, and been coached or trained by an adult in evangelism. They also share their rescue story more often (a nice trend), perform gutsy acts more often, pray with friends for courage more often, pray and use a journal more often, discover the personal needs of a non-Christian more often, and overcome particular fears to talk to someone about Jesus more often. It is very interesting that the other specifically-identified connectivity strategies in this section--small groups and adult meetings--record no effects for this item. Neither are there effects for church attendance, hanging out with Christians or non-Christians, doing things to build friendships with non-Christians, or opening yourself honestly to either Christians or non-Christians. **What cautions should we consider giving to students who may think that their on-line connections are relationally adequate?**

Like other key values of DC/LA '97, **getting connected** was clearly caught by conference attendees--with great benefit to their evangelism-related behaviors.

The evidence that the last of the key DC/LA '97 teaching values was caught has already been testified to under the discussion of the "gutsy acts" item (see Love Others section). Additional support is found in two other items where students were given the chance to report on the frequency of their behaviors. First, 53% of students pray with friends for courage at a rate of once a week or more. Another 20% pray like this monthly. Second, 55% of students report that they have overcome a particular fear in order to talk to someone for Jesus at least once a month. Both of these items support the none-too-surprising conclusion that, not only did DC/LA '97 contribute directly to the en-COURAGE-ment of student's evangelism efforts, but the conference also successfully helped students grab some specific strategies to deal overcome their fears for the cause of evangelism. *Have courage* was also a training-value winner.

Some persons really grab challenges and step up to make unusual contributions. 11% of all those attending the conference had "started a club at their school to help Christians reach others for Jesus" prior to DC/LA '97. These trailblazers have been joined by an additional 13% since the conferences. While the percentages may seem small, this represents 125 new campus clubs *from the sample alone!* Our research sampling procedure makes it safe to generalize and report conservatively that **over 1000 new school-based outreach clubs have likely been started since DC/LA '97 to help Christian kids reach their friends for Jesus Christ.** Not surprisingly, those who have started such clubs report a significantly higher degree of frequency for 28 of the 32 evangelism-related behaviors. Only attending church, hanging out with non-Christian friends, doing things to build friendships with non-Christians, and being open and honest with Christian friends showed no difference between those who have started clubs and those who haven't.