



# The Christian Study Center Alternative

By Jeffrey Breshears

In Romans 8:28 the apostle Paul writes, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” This principle applies not only to our personal lives but to the whole realm of human existence. For example, with the increasing secularization of higher education over the past fifty years, residual Christian influences have been marginalized if not purged altogether from campus life. But at some universities this is opening up opportunities for innovative new ministries such as Christian study centers that offer students (and even some faculty) not only a place of spiritual refuge but also the kind of vibrant intellectual stimulation that is often missing in the typical university environment.

Most colleges and universities are essentially closed shops in which only secular liberal and radical left-wing ideas and values are tolerated. As for traditional orthodox Christianity, it is regarded as so antiquated and politically incorrect as to be unworthy of serious consideration.



Center for Christian Study, Charlottesville, VA

So ironically, the one place where Christians can express themselves freely and engage in open dialogue and debate with believers and non-believers alike is in the one venue that honors true intellectual diversity and academic freedom: a Christian study center.

The genesis for the modern Christian study center was the founding of L’Abri in the mid-1950s by the philosopher and

theologian, Francis Schaeffer. Frustrated by the failure of the mainstream church to effectively engage modern Western culture, Schaeffer and his wife, Edith, envisioned a study center

that would facilitate Christian discipleship by integrating Christian spirituality and a Biblically-centered critique of modern culture within the context of a wholistic Christian worldview. Schaeffer’s life and legacy has had a significant impact on evangelical Christianity, and he is generally regarded as the father of modern cultural apologetics.

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## The Areopagus Calendar

### Current Seminars

**A History of Christianity In America: From the Colonial Era To the American Revolution**

Wednesdays, Jan. 11 - April 4  
6:45 PM  
Johnson Ferry Baptist Church

**Frontline Apologetics: How To Respond to Questions From Spiritual Seekers, Religious Skeptics, and Argumentative Contrarians**

Tuesdays, Jan. 10 - April 3  
7:00 PM  
Perimeter Church

### Upcoming Forums

**“New Insights Into the Resurrection of Jesus”**

Thursday, March 15<sup>th</sup>  
7:30 PM

Perimeter Church

A presentation by  
**Dr. Michael Licona**

Author of *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historical Approach*



# “The Christian Study Center Alternative”

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Due to the secular liberal domination of the mainstream media and popular culture, Christian beliefs and values are often excluded not only from academia but from American public life in general. Therefore, as Schaeffer recognized, there is a need for Christian study centers not only near universities but in major cities. These centers can fill a critical void by functioning as (1) an interdenominational ministry where Christians can come together for spiritual nourishment and (2) a neutral (i.e., non-church) environment that is attractive to non-Christians.

Earlier this year I received a grant to visit various Christian study centers around the country, and over the last several weeks I traveled to two that are university-related: the Center for Christian Study in Charlottesville, Virginia, adjacent to the University of Virginia, and the Christian Study Center of Gainesville, Florida, directly across from the main campus of the University of Florida. Both are impressive ministries that attract scores of students every day who come to study, socialize, consume drinks and snacks from the coffee bar, and/or sit in on the lectures and discussion groups that each center sponsors.

In addition, I also visited Credo House, located just north of downtown Oklahoma City. Combining a Starbucks coffee bar with the ambiance of a library augmented by a unique Christian history motif, Credo House sponsors a regular schedule of seminars and forums similar to what we offer at the Areopagus. The facility includes a main room lined with bookshelves, along with tables and chairs and sofas for lounging, socializing or studying. It also features state-of-the-art audio-visual technology for recording lectures, but apparently the main attraction is a hi-tech coffee bar that serves up “the best coffee in Oklahoma.” Credo House draws in a diverse assortment of patrons from college students to older adults, and its

laid-back but cultured atmosphere presents a comfortable setting for engaging non-Christians.

Presently, there are an estimated twenty or so university-related study centers in operation and perhaps as many as a dozen urban study centers. All have their unique features, but there seem to be four keys to success that most hold in common: (1) a focused vision for ministry that meets the needs of their respective target audience; (2) a strong support network of local patrons; (3) a comfortable and “neutral” atmosphere that is inviting to non-Christians; and (4) great coffee.

A major metropolitan area such as Atlanta certainly has the financial resources to support a Christian study center, and the Areopagus has the spiritual and intellectual resources that are ideal for such a ministry. Obviously, nothing can replace the local church as the spiritual home base for Christian believers, but we need innovative ministries that can take the light and truth of the Gospel into areas of our society that churches cannot reach. That, among other reasons, is why an independent Christian study center is needed here in Atlanta.



The Christian Study Center of Gainesville, Florida, featuring Pascal's Coffee Shop

## The Areopagus Calendar

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### Upcoming Forums

#### “The Road To Auschwitz: Lessons of the Holocaust”



- The historical roots of anti-Semitism
- Why the Jews were targeted for annihilation
- Darwinism and the Holocaust
- The problem of Tolerance
- Why politics matters

“A presentation by  
Dr. Jeffrey Bre shears  
Founder and president of  
The Areopagus  
Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup>  
7:30 PM  
Perimeter Church



#### “Has the Bible Been Accurately Transmitted and Preserved Through the Centuries?”

Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>  
7:30 PM  
Perimeter Church

A presentation by  
Dr. Daniel Wallace  
Professor of New Testament Studies at  
Dallas Theological Seminary and  
Executive Director of the Center for the  
Study of New Testament Manuscripts.