



## After 60 Years, Campus Crusade for Christ to Change Name

Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC), a mainstay of Christian outreach ministries at universities across the United States for the past 60 years, is changing its iconic name because “the word ‘crusade’ has negative associations with the bloody Christian conquests of the 11th to 13th centuries,” reported the New York Times. In a press release, the organization itself explained that it was changing its name to simply “Cru” in an effort to “overcome existing barriers and perceptions inherent in the original name.”



CCC’s late founder, Bill Bright, was aware of the perceived problems inherent in the group’s original brand and, said his wife Vonette Bright, “actually considered changing the name 20 or 25 years ago.” She added that with the new name the group hoped “to remove any obstacle to people hearing about the most important person who ever lived — Jesus Christ.”

The group’s president, Steve Douglass, said that after six decades the time had come for a new branding. “Our leadership team and board of directors are united in their belief that this is the right time to embrace a new name,” said Douglass, “and that this name meets our objective of achieving a greater level of effectiveness in ministry.”

CCC’s U.S. vice president, Steve Sellers, noted that the name change “is really for the benefit of others. Ultimately, it’s not about our name, but how we live out our mission everyday.” Sellers told [CNN](#) that over the past several years the term crusade “was becoming more problematic ... we were having more and more pushback [and] the name was hindering us from doing our mission....” On its website CCC explained: “Our surveys show that, in the U.S., 20 percent of the people willing to consider the gospel are less interested in talking with us after they hear the name.”

While there were a total of 1,600 possible names offered during the two-year process of finding a new brand, “Cru” won out, largely because it already had a track-record with the organization, having been used since the mid-1990s by thousands of student members as an affectionate nickname for the ministry.

Since its founding by Bright in 1951 on the campus of the University of California-Los Angeles, Campus Crusade for Christ has grown into the premier Christian outreach ministry on university campuses around the world. Today the ministry boasts more than 25,000 full-time and part-time staff members serving in 191 countries.

When Bright launched the group, at about the same time the Rev. Billy Graham was conducting his gospel “crusades” in cities across America, it was common for evangelists to refer to their outreach using the medieval military term. (The word “[Crusade](#)” comes from the Latin *crux*, meaning “cross,” in reference to the crosses emblazoned on the tunics and shields of Christian warriors who defended the



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Holy Land — and ultimately, Christian Europe — against Muslim invaders in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries.) “But missionaries working internationally say they now find that the term often causes offense, especially to Muslims,” reported the *New York Times*. After [Franklin Graham](#) took over leadership of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, he quickly dropped the term “crusade” from the large stadium events he conducted, referring to them, instead, as “festivals.”

While CCC is largely still a college ministry, eliminating the word “campus from its name may be part of the brand strategy as well. The group noted that its outreach now includes 29 distinct ministries, many of them not closely connected with colleges or universities. For example, reported the [Christian Post](#), CCC “may be best known for the film ‘JESUS’ — the most watched and translated film of all time — and for ‘The Four Spiritual Laws’ booklet ” —the most widely used Christian evangelism tool among evangelical Christians.

CNN noted that the global focus of CCC was on display last year, when a staff member “helped the trapped Chilean miners. Christian Maureira, the head of CCC’s Chilean ministry, provided Spanish-language MP3 versions of the Bible to the miners and helped get them T-shirts they wore when they emerged from the San Jose mine.”

As for the elimination of “Christ” from its name, CCC said that change does not imply less emphasis on the Christian gospel that is the foundation of its mission. “Cru enables us to have discussions about Christ with people who might initially be turned off by a more overtly Christian name,” the organization explained in a statement.

Douglass emphasized that while the name has changed, the mission of the group he leads will be the same as it has been for the past 60 years, which is “to give every person on the planet the opportunity to say yes to Jesus.”

The organization said that the name Cru, which will be officially launched in early 2012, will only apply to the U.S. organization, since branches in other parts of the world already use a name different from CCC.



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