

Ashley Ross, Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award Winner

Get to know Ashley Ross (Class of 2004), our winner for the 2022-2023 Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award winner. Learn more about [the award here](#).

What does this award mean to you?

I am tremendously grateful to receive this award. I was quite surprised and humbled when I found out I was chosen, as I know LCS has graduated and sent out hundreds of talented and godly people who would also be well-deserving of this honor. It has caused me to reflect deeply on my time at Liberty, which I remember so fondly and with extreme gratitude. But to me, it ultimately means that LCS values The Great Commission given to us by Jesus and what God is doing throughout the lost and unreached all over the world.

What was the biggest impact that Liberty had on you as a student?

The love and support of the teachers and coaches. They not only cared about developing me as a student and athlete but also my discipleship process and personal walk with Jesus. Their loving, holistic approach laid a great foundation for my faith and shaped who I am today.

What would you say is your biggest accomplishment thus far?

My family! I have been married to my husband, Justin, for 15 years. We have three beautiful children. I have twin 9-year-olds, Aaron and Gracie, who were adopted from Honduras, and a biological 2-year-old daughter named Abigail.

Next would be our mission work and the [formation of Sparrow Missions](#). My first international missions experience was with Liberty and very formational to who I am now. I first moved overseas to serve as a missionary in Honduras in 2009. My husband and I founded a nonprofit ministry called **Sparrow Missions that aims to disciple, develop, and educate the forgotten of this world** (Luke 12:6-7). Over the past 13 years, I have seen God do incredible things. Leading women's discipleship groups, counseling, community outreach projects, teaching, hosting, connection with short-term mission teams, and watching God completely transform an impoverished community are just a few highlights. In 2015, we founded The Sparrow Academy to educate and develop leaders in an impoverished/gang-controlled community called "Rancho Bonito." We now have more than 200 students enrolled and the community has been transformed. We are seeing young people who had little to no opportunities outside of joining a gang now studying at the university level and stepping into leadership roles inside Sparrow Missions. We have also planted churches, developed a youth soccer ministry, and discipleship groups for all ages. To God be the glory.

[Listen to Ashley on The Warrior Way Podcast](#)

How do you continue to grow in Christ and serve your community?

Grow in Christ: To grow in my relationship with the Lord, I continue to discover the necessity of abiding in Him. I connect with God daily through his Word, prayer, and fellowship with other believers. One of my current favorite things to do is throw on some headphones to listen to God's word, a sermon, or a podcast, and then spend time in prayer as I walk in a beautiful garden near our home.

Serve My Community: In early 2022, we started to transition the ministry in Honduras into the hands of Honduran leadership. This opened the door to expand the reach of Sparrow Missions into the 10/40 Window by moving to Northern Thailand. We arrived in June 2022 and I am currently serving as the academic counselor at Chiang Rai International Christian School (CRICS), which is made up of 70% nonprofit/missionary kids and 30% local Thais. God has opened the door for our family to partner with a pastor and his wife that are church-planting in two unreached villages here in Northern Thailand. We are excited to see what God has in store!

What did the biblical component at Liberty mean to you as a student?

I am thankful for the Bible classes, scripture memorization, Bible studies, and biblically integrated education that I received from Liberty. That solid foundation shaped my Christian Worldview and identity. Liberty helped me to hide God's Word in my heart. My prayer is the same as David's in Psalm 119: "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." The biblical component at Liberty equipped me to live a life worthy of the calling that God has placed on my life. I am thankful for it. And for every teacher, mentor, and coach who invested in my life.

Anything else you would like to add?

I am tremendously thankful and honored to receive this award. I look forward to reconnecting more with the Liberty family throughout the year!

Zak Bowles, Distinguished Alumni Service Award Winner

Get to know Zak Bowles (Class of 2003), our winner for the 2022-2023 Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award winner. Learn more about [the award here](#).

What does this award mean to you?

I love that Liberty is still caring about and investing in its graduates' lives long after they have walked the stage at Liberty. To me, it means that Liberty cares about the people it is sending out into the real world.

What was the biggest impact that Liberty had on you as a student?

I don't think it's possible to pick one thing. Liberty taught me who Jesus was, and is, that

discipline in the small things (like a uniform) bleeds over into the big areas of life. Liberty also taught me how to work hard. It was modeled by all of my teachers and coaches. It was an expectation for every student in the classroom and on the athletic fields. Liberty helped turn me into the man I am today.

[Listen to Zak on The Warrior Way Podcast](#)

How do you continue to grow in Christ and serve your community?

The Lord has taught me so much through teaching and being around kids. I've learned patience and understanding. The Lord has walked me through some tough, tough times. But through those tough times, I was better able to relate to my students' lives. I had a better understanding of where they were coming from when they were walking through my classroom door than I ever had before. Kids don't care about what you know until they know that you care.

What did the biblical component at Liberty mean to you as a student?

One of the big focuses at Liberty right now is to teach through a biblical worldview perspective. I always felt like my teachers and coaches at Liberty were doing this naturally. When I was corrected, I was always explained why I was being corrected, and why that correction was good and biblical. I didn't always like that answer or agree with it in my time here at Liberty, but I've learned that it was the right thing as I've gotten older.

Anything else you would like to add?

I'm very proud to still be a part of Liberty, and all of the blessings that we have been given since the old campus. I think if you asked most of us students who went to the old campus if we ever would've attained something like we have now, we would've laughed. It's been amazing to watch us go from portable buildings and an old stable to top-notch facilities!