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The Wise Professor: The Skillful Art of Living in God's Mission

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO:

THE WISE PROFESSOR: THE SKILLFUL ART OF LIVING IN GOD'S MISSION



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

AARON BADENHOP

PROJECT FACULTY:

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Dedication

To Elisabeth: I know of no one else that has displayed your kind of tenacious endurance in clinging to Christ to be formed by him. Thank you for making sacrifices beyond measure so that I can pursue my dreams.

To Brooke and Molly: May you ever experience the profound love of God in Christ.

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Epigraph

And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. (1 Kings 10:24 ESV)

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Research Method

This Doctoral Project utilized a blended research and design methodology called ‘Collaborative Design for Ministry and Nonprofit Contexts’. In Collaborative Design, practitioners work with stakeholder representatives to address a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) in their context. Using a combination of bibliographic resources, local knowledge derived from stakeholder Workshops, and an iterative process of continuous adjustment using ‘just enough’ feedback information at each juncture of development, practitioners produce an application-oriented Project that seeks to effect Christ-centered change.

Abstract

Today's Christian professor in the secular university setting is likely an expert in their academic field. Likewise, many Christian faculty are sincere in their faith and devout in their practice. The Christian professor's expert knowledge is impressive and their heart for God is admirable. Yet, today's Christian professor is simultaneously likely to be ill-equipped and disconnected from having a missional impact in their secular university context.

In my work with Cru at The Ohio State University, this challenge is complex; there are no easy answers. Christian faculty are typically educated and trained in environments that assume the irrelevance of God to their area of study. They live their daily lives in a context that promotes spiritual malformation, an environment that tends to determine one's identity by their accolades. Faculty who would desire to influence others on campus for Christ, even students in particular, often feel unprepared to put their desire into practice.

The most common degree needed to be a professor in the secular university is the PhD (doctor of philosophy), meaning a teacher of the love of wisdom. Yet, many centuries ago the academy relegated Christian philosophy and theology to the periphery of public knowledge, or excluded Biblical wisdom altogether.

The Wise Professor is a program for Christian faculty to gather together as a community of like-minded peers, seeking wisdom as the skillful art of living in God's mission. If wisdom has practical, ethical, theological, missional, and formational dimensions, then Christian faculty would do well to explore all of these dimensions of wisdom. In order to live out their God-given vocation, Christian faculty are invited to grow in living a wise life in accordance with the mission of God, for the good of the university and the world, and the glory of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

What follows is a curriculum, a program designed to gather Christian faculty in the secular university setting, to support one another toward an increased ability to fulfill their missional vocation on campus. In the fall of 2020, I began to evaluate the NPO (need, problem, or opportunity) in my ministry context with Cru at The Ohio State University. It was discerned that a problem was that Christian faculty were often relationally disconnected from each other and from Christian ministries on campus, while they were ill-equipped for having a missional impact among students and the wider campus community. This project is called *The Wise Professor: The Skillful Art of Living in God's Mission*; it seeks to begin to address this problem through positioning Christian faculty to explore and to acquire greater wisdom.

The Background: from Respect to Contempt

Post-graduation, after receiving my bachelor's degree, and after two years working as an international intern with Cru in Brazil, I first began working in undergraduate ministry with Cru full-time in 2005. In this era, it seemed that one of the greatest obstacles for college students to get involved in our ministry with Cru at Ohio State was spiritual apathy. Often I would hear students shirk from further conversation regarding their spiritual lives by saying something like "maybe I will get involved in church after I get a job, get married, settle down, and have some children." As discouraged as I felt about these students' apparent indifference to Christ at the time, at least to them it seemed that respectable and responsible adults should practice the Christian faith.

After a decade had passed, by around 2015, I noticed a change in college students' resistance to involvement in Cru at Ohio State. The defiance sounded more like: "why would I get involved in a group full of hypocritical bigots?" The changing nature of what it might mean to identify as a Christian at our public university raised some questions for me. How would I, as a full-time Christian minister, be able to effectively build relational bridges with people who hold such hostility toward Christian believers? Might there be someone else in the campus community that would inherently have more credibility, that would more naturally gain a hearing?

It seemed, at least to me, that no one would be better positioned on campus to overcome students' objections to faith than Christian professors. Likewise, who else was better positioned to help Christian students on campus to endure in their faith in the midst increasing social pressures and intellectual doubts? These questions prompted us to attempt to build a network of Christian faculty at Ohio State from various academic disciplines under the banner of a program we have called "The Thompson Institute." As I built relationships with Christian faculty, we sought to give them a greater platform for influence in and through Cru at Ohio State. We hosted events open to the public and with guest academics and discussed how the Christian faith might be relevant to real life issues. Christian professors at Ohio State came to speak at various Cru events and venues. We recorded

interviews with professors and discussed their spiritual journeys and their work on campus for a podcast we called “The Walk” and shared these recordings with students.¹

The results have been mixed and complex. On the one hand, a typical non-Christian student at Ohio State today is more likely to find a professor on campus to be credible than a Christian minister. Professors are able to support Christian students in their faith in ways Cru staff members or pastors typically cannot. On the other, college students did not seem to benefit from engaging these Christian faculty as much as I had hoped. I began to wonder: is a stage and a microphone enough? I wondered if there were some missing ingredients. Perhaps Christian faculty needed something more than just a platform to have an impact.

The Discovery Phase: The Sacred and Secular Divide

To begin my research, I gathered feedback from various kinds of stakeholders: Christian professors at Ohio State from different academic disciplines, graduate and undergraduate students, veteran Cru staff, and a Christian philosopher with a background working in campus ministry with Cru. At the outset I had presented that I had observed that Christian faculty were “not well-positioned” for having a missional impact on campus. Through discovery workshops with these stakeholders, it was discerned that this observation was too vague, that the root problem was two-fold. First, Christian professors had felt relationally isolated and unsupported while having little connection to any of the Christian ministries that focused on university students. Additionally, these faculty had climbed the ranks of the university through an academic system that made the Christian faith irrelevant at best to their work in the academy. Therefore, we clarified the NPO to say that Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for having a missional impact on campus.

One-on-one interviews with some students reinforced the idea that both Christian and spiritually-seeking students would be receptive to Christian professors that were open about their faith. However, it was extremely uncommon for these students to encounter Christian faculty who were open about their faith, and these students admitted this contributed to a feeling of dissonance between their journeys of faith and their academic studies. These conversations helped to affirm that campus ministry at Ohio State as I had known it had unintentionally perpetuated a problem for both Christian faculty and for college students. Faculty were not adequately fulfilling their missional vocation, while students lacked clarity regarding the way in which Jesus was relevant to the main reason they were at the university, preparing for their own vocations. I concluded that it is a significant problem for life-long discipleship if Jesus seemed most relevant to evangelistic conversations, Sunday morning worship, or life after death. A conversation with a Christian philosopher helped me to see that this is not isolated to my local Cru context, but that a sacred and secular divide permeates every area of life in Western culture. This is no small challenge.

1. Aaron Badenhop and Jordan Browning, “The Walk: A Spiritual Journey,” accessed February 7, 2023, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-walk-a-spiritual-journey/id1346112163>.

The Design Phase: The Path to Wisdom

This next phase of research involved proposing concepts to stakeholders and designing prototypes that could be utilized to address the NPO as described above. In this phase I facilitated a workshop with several different Christian faculty and a graduate student. I hosted one-on-one interviews with a local pastor, a Christian philosopher, and a veteran Cru staff member. Concepts around three themes were proposed and discussed in regard to the development of Christian faculty: mission, worldview, and formation. A mission-focused approach would emphasize teaching and training faculty for having an enhanced public witness for Christ. A worldview-focused approach would emphasize enhanced thinking in regard to Christian theology, philosophy, and apologetics. Finally, a formation-focused approach would emphasize the inner-life and growth in spiritual and emotional maturity. Each of these concepts was proposed with the idea of imagining how all three might come together into one project for Christian faculty.

Each of the three concepts received affirmation from stakeholders in context of the workshop, but two critical insights came in one-on-one interviews with other stakeholders. One stakeholder wondered if by separating each of these three concepts (particularly separating worldview development from spiritual formation) that I would be unintentionally reinforcing a disintegrated human anthropology, separating the mind from the heart, soul, and body. In other words, this stakeholder suggested that spiritual formation ought not be considered a separate agenda from the development of a Christian worldview. A holistic view of spiritual formation will mean that one has a more profound understanding of how Jesus is relevant to all of life. Through this conversation I determined that a professor's worldview inherently ought to be developed by emphasizing holistic growth in both mission and formation.

Another important insight emerged from another interview with a stakeholder. They wondered if there might be a unifying theme that would tie together these different concepts focused on connecting and equipping Christian faculty. As I ruminated on this, I also came across Tremper Longman's work on wisdom; I discovered an overarching theme that brought together all of these concepts in a way that seemed fitting to my context: wisdom.² Longman's work on wisdom would provide the unifying framework needed to develop *The Wise Professor: The Skillful Art of Living in God's Mission*.

The Delivery Phase: Creating the Content

In order to gain clarity as I began to create this project, I needed to determine the scope of the project and outline benchmarks for success. In regard to scope, I determined that at the completion of this Doctor of Ministry degree, a pilot program would exist to help equip Christian faculty at The Ohio State University to integrate their faith with their position on campus and to live on mission. This pilot program would be open to faculty from any academic discipline at the main campus in

2. Tremper Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

Columbus. The program would involve a written curriculum as well as a corresponding guide for group discussion and spiritual practices. Benchmarks for success were considered as follows:

- The curriculum must be clearly written with multiple, sound citations, and it must help to address the NPO. The intended audience demands a curriculum with sound grammar and with a strong dependence upon expert sources.
- The content and guide for discussion and spiritual practices must be practical for short gatherings. Regular gatherings must not last longer than ninety minutes due to a professor's time constraints, and so the combination of curriculum, group discussion, and spiritual practice must fit within this ninety-minute timeframe.
- There must be flexibility in the format of the program. Inevitably a faculty member will miss attendance at a gathering so there must be a suggested pathway for individual engagement with the content.
- The program must engage the whole person. There must be a way to demonstrate that the program is able to cultivate growth in the audience loving God and neighbor with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30).

After several months of developing the project, I received feedback from eight different stakeholders that had given feedback at previous stages of my research. With their help I discerned that the project was mostly on the right track in meeting these benchmarks, with some caveats below. The goal of this Doctor of Ministry research project is not to create a full-fledged project by the end of the degree. Rather, the goal has been to produce a robust sample that can be filled out at a later date. What follows in this project portfolio is a guide for seven sessions that could be implemented on a bi-weekly basis; there is content for one semester. The project will later be expanded to include at least five more sessions, filling out content for most of a second semester. As early as fall of 2023, Christian faculty will be invited into small groups of colleagues to participate in this program. As a Christian professor emerges from having completed this program in spring of 2024, the intent will be to integrate them in various ways into the missional strategies of a ministry like Cru at Ohio State.

Learnings

The nature of what this project is seeking to address is so profoundly challenging, it seems inevitable that some aspect of the project will be underdeveloped. During the delivery phase, stakeholders had an eagerness to see how the project will have a practical missional impact. The content might be intellectually stimulating, but is it missionally practical? This project must be framed in a proper context.

First, the impact that a Christian faculty member may have in people's lives on campus will be limited by lack of collaboration with Christian ministries on campus. A faculty member will not have the time and energy to do all that even a part-time parachurch staff is able to do. A wise professor that has been formed for mission cannot fulfill their vocation alone. To use what may seem like a

crude baseball analogy, the wise professor is much like the closer coming out of the bullpen at the right strategic moment. Christian faculty cannot and ought not do everything for the team, but they can have a unique and particular role that is essential for the team's goals.

Second, ministries like Cru have already produced resources that specialize in painting a picture of what a Christian professor's personal ministry may look like.³ This program is not intended to replace or even to critique such helpful resources. Rather, this project is envisioned as a complimentary material, a sort of prolegomenon. It seeks to promote the growth in wisdom of Christian faculty in order to best utilize the practical strategies and methods displayed in such resources.

Third, a key learning through the Discover and Design phases is that in order to address the NPO mentioned above, this project ought not merely emerge as another book. Stakeholders persuasively articulated that they already tend to be overloaded with books to read; a book alone would not help professors to be either relationally connected or sufficiently missionally equipped. This is a significant reason why, as important as the essay portion of each session may be, there is regular emphasis on personal reflection, group discussion, and shared spiritual practices. What follows is curriculum for a ministry program.

Fourth, some factors that contribute to the holistic benefit that a Christian professor might receive from this project are outside of the control of a group facilitator. If wisdom is cultivated in community, as group facilitator I cannot control the often scattered and over-filled schedules of the professors, securing consistently well-attended groups. If wisdom formation requires relational safety, I cannot control the professors' preexisting emotional maturity to be able to curate such an environment. Therefore, much of the fruitfulness of this program will rely upon available, relational, and teachable professors. It is yet to be determined if all of these factors will come together for a fruitful program.

Next Steps

As early as fall of 2023, Christian faculty will be invited into small groups of colleagues to participate in this program in which these first seven sessions can be implemented. In the time between my graduation from Portland Seminary in the spring of 2023 and the beginning of spring semester of 2024 at Ohio State, my intent is to write five more sessions. These subsequent sessions will discuss the following themes: a theology of work, the Trinity and the Christian life, discernment in our cultural moment, Christian apologetics, and practical ministry skills. As a Christian professor emerges from having completed this program in spring of 2024, the intent will be to strategically integrate them in various ways into the missional objectives of a ministry like Cru at Ohio State.

3. Rick Hove and Heather Holleman, *A Grand Story: An Invitation to Christian Professors* (Orlando, FL: Cru Press, 2017).

Final Reflections

When I first began to build relationships with Christian faculty on campus several years ago, I felt a certain kind of intimidation. So many of the professors I know are experts, greatly accomplished in their fields. I have struggled with feelings of my own inadequacy. Who am I, a person working in full-time campus ministry, to presume to invest into the lives of such exceptional people? I have found myself experiencing a significant tension. On the one hand, I truly am out of my league. On the other hand, these elite Christian faculty have been transparent enough to show that they are human beings like anyone else, experiencing their own stresses, fears, doubts, and feelings of inadequacy. Professors are people too, and that's good for us all to remember. Many such faculty have not only tolerated my requests for their input, but they have also believed in me and this project and have encouraged me to press on. I will forever be grateful.

The Wise Professor: The Skillful Art of Living in God's Mission will not solve all the world's problems. Neither is it the silver bullet that will change campus ministry forever. Yet, my prayer is that it would help Christian professors to grow in wisdom that God will use to produce ripple effects at Ohio State, other public university settings, and in generations to come.

Doctoral Project

Preface

The Wise Professor: The Skillful Art of Living in God's Mission is a program curriculum that has been designed to help equip Christian faculty to have an enhanced missional impact in the secular university setting, while fostering community and inter-personal support. It is not a comprehensive material that provides all a Christian professor needs to live out their vocation faithfully. In fact, another separate and complimentary material could be produced in the future for those working in campus ministry to be able to platform and utilize such faculty effectively for missional ends. In many ways, this program curriculum is meant to be a prolegomenon to other practical resources for Christian faculty to live missionally. Each 90-minute session begins by reading an essay together, discussing the essay with peers and connecting around its theme, while concluding each session with a group spiritual practice.

The Wise Professor: The Skillful Art of Living in God's Mission (Session 1)

Wisdom and Expert Knowledge

It may seem redundant, this use of the word “wise” in relation to “professor.” Is such a descriptor necessary? Is not wisdom an inherent quality that already describes all faculty in the academy? Is not expert knowledge the same as wisdom?⁴ Does not a PhD or a terminal degree in today's university naturally and sufficiently produce wisdom? And if a professor is a sincere follower of Jesus, does this fact alone not fill in any significant wisdom gaps? Such questions require a thoughtful response. I will begin with a background story.

Throughout much of my work with a campus ministry called Cru at The Ohio State University over the course of almost two decades, I had presumed a simple affirmative answer to the questions above. Certainly, all professors are sufficiently wise, at least the Christian ones. As I began to connect with Christian faculty at the university several years ago, I sought to help these professors become integrated with Cru's ministry presence on campus focused on undergraduate students. In order to involve Christian professors, I recorded podcast interviews with them as we explored their faith and spirituality, and we shared the interviews with students. We invited Christian faculty to our Cru commissioning events for new student leaders. Christian professors took the stage at our Cru weekly meeting on campus. Through all these experiences, I still believe more than ever that the involvement of Christian faculty in our Cru ministry is crucial! Yet, I will never forget the words of an involved student when I asked for his feedback about one of our events that featured Christian professors. To paraphrase, he said, “Honestly, I get discouraged when I find out Christian faculty are coming to our meeting. I'm not sure why they come. Whenever they talk, I do not find what they have to say very helpful or relevant. Just because they are smart, and they are Christian, does not mean that they have anything to say worth hearing. I would rather hear from one of our Cru staff or even another upperclassman. At least they have something to say that seems more relevant.”

Though I appreciated this student's honesty I was discouraged to say the least. Some context is important; this Christian student was not a poor student. In fact, he listened to his professors well enough during his classes to have graduated from Ohio State with high marks. He is on an academic path to one day become a physician! Though I would be tempted to write off this student as an anomaly, I have concluded that his honest feedback represents perceptions shared by many

4. Denis Haack, “What If Expert Knowledge Isn't Wise Enough for a Happy Life?,” *Sage Christianity Blog*, August 23, 2021, <https://www.sagechristianity.com/articles-essays/what-if-expert-knowledge-isnt-wise-enough-for-a-happy-life>.

college students today. Many students at the university, whether they are Christians or not, perceive that professors may be experts in their field, but are not necessarily experts at life.

But this story raises a question: what is the disconnect? How can a good student who listens well enough to his professors in the context of the classroom become discouraged when he discovers a Christian professor is coming to speak at a Cru event? One could question what biases this student brought with him to the university. Perhaps historian Mark Noll's well-known critique of the anti-intellectual culture of Evangelicalism has some role in this student's disinterest in hearing from Christian faculty.⁵

However complex this issue may be, one ought not ignore this possibility: many college students intuitively recognize that just because a professor may be intelligent and highly educated, it does not mean they know how to live a life worth emulating. A Christian professor may be an expert in their field and attend church with great devotion, but that does not mean they inherently know how to impact a student's life regarding the issues that are most important to a student's heart. Through the course of my years working in campus ministry with a front row seat of university life, I have concluded the following: highly accomplished faculty in the secular academy with a sincere faith in Jesus Christ, though worthy of sincere respect for many reasons, can still have significant gaps in wisdom. Therefore, the ultimate (and perhaps overambitious) goal of this program is the cultivation of wise faculty.

Why Wisdom?

Even though professors may have gaps in their wisdom, we should pause to appreciate all that a typical Christian professor at a university like Ohio State does bring to the table. The faculty I am privileged to know are more intelligent than me; they are truly experts at the top of their academic disciplines. Many of these professors have a profound faith as they have faced deep, personal suffering in this broken and sad world. The faculty I am privileged to know long for their lives to count; they desire to serve Jesus Christ and to honor him with their lives. I am privileged to know professors that have hearts for students that go far beyond concern for their academic success. Whatever it is that these faculty might be lacking is due neither to unintelligence nor hard-heartedness. Though my purpose is not to cast blame, the problem of insufficiently wise Christian professors is more the fault of the Church than the professors themselves. This program is a humble attempt to begin to rectify this problem.

Throughout my research and consultation with faculty, students, and pastors, I have attempted to look at this problem from various angles. The nature of what a typical Christian professor lacks is complex. One could look at the issue of knowledge and notice that Christian faculty tend to be significantly more educated in their academic discipline than they are educated in Biblical studies,

5. Mark A Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

theology, and philosophy.⁶ Neither regular church attendance nor small group Bible study participation suffices. One could look at the personal lives of professors and see that they spend most of their waking hours working in an academic culture that cultivates competition, stress, performance, over-work, and intellectualism rather than deep personal relationships, self-sacrifice, embracing of limitations, emotional self-awareness, and peace of mind. The academy sends the message that the professor's accolades and credentials (or lack thereof) are their identity.⁷ Likewise, one might look at the issue of skill and notice that Christian faculty tend to lack competence and confidence in being able to relate to students outside of the classroom, to grasp the mindset and experiences of Gen Z, and to incorporate a language of faith into these relationships when they are under great pressure to carefully "manage their identities" in the university setting.⁸

The challenges and shortcomings mentioned above are far from being a comprehensive list. This means, sadly, there are no easy answers. There is no quick fix. To address only one or two of these issues is to ignore many others. What is needed is something more holistic. What is needed is the cultivation of wisdom.

Wondering About Wisdom

Curiosity seems to be growing in our contemporary culture towards discovering, or re-discovering, wisdom. Krista Tippett is a Peabody award-winning journalist, and has written a *New York Times* bestseller called *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*.⁹ To say that Tippett has a large audience would be an understatement, as she also hosts a podcast called *On Being* that has been downloaded more than 350 million times.¹⁰ The public interest in Tippett's work demonstrates that there are many who share her curiosity about the pursuit of wisdom. With Tippett, many recognize that in the last few hundred years we have "enshrined reality's sharp edges" and focused on "solutions and plans and ideologies," but have not arrived at wisdom.¹¹ Tippett appreciates the value of religion for wisdom, as far as it cultivates an appreciation of mystery and wonder at what science alone cannot explain. In her reflections on wisdom Tippett seeks to

6. Paul M Gould, *The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 7.

7. Rick Hove and Heather Holleman, *A Grander Story: An Invitation to Christian Professors* (Orlando, FL: Cru Press, 2017), 37.

8. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 259.

9. Krista Tippett, *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry Into the Mystery and Art of Living*, Kindle Edition (New York, NY: Penguin, 2016).

10. Krista Tippett, "On Being," accessed September 27, 2022, <https://onbeing.org/series/podcast/>.

11. Tippett, *Becoming Wise*, 3.

find what she admits eluded even Albert Einstein, a “theory of everything,” the “great puzzle of how the world works at the cosmic level.”¹²

One might say that Tippet is a good example of someone that has experienced what philosopher James K.A. Smith (referencing Charles Taylor) has described as the cross-pressures of immanence and transcendence.¹³ On the one hand, the advancement of science and technology has given humanity greater power and control over life in this world than ever before. This is immanence, an emphasis on what is before us, what can be seen, touched, explained, and manipulated. On the other hand, this focus on immanence has diminished (at least in the West) humanity’s sense of wonder at any reality which lies beyond the material world, making the transcendent irrelevant if not unreal. This process has been called “disenchantment,” the loss of living in what we intuitively perceive to be an enchanted world. All that is real and true seems to require scientific measurement. So, for Tippet, the wise life must appreciate and incorporate both mystery (transcendence) and practicality (immanence). Tippet is on to something about wisdom, even if her spiritual journey has moved away from her Baptist religious roots.

This raises the question: does the Christian faith have wisdom to offer? Sadly, many today would consider Christianity, and those who follow its teachings, to be a roadblock to wisdom. In fact, many would see the Church as the epitome of folly. It was already almost a century ago that C.S. Lewis observed that many in his day considered Christians to be too heavenly minded for any earthly good.¹⁴ There are leaders in the Church today that are wrestling deeply with what they see as counterfeit wisdom among those who profess faith in Christ. Pastor Zach Eswine has started a ministry called “Sage Christianity,” arguing that we need “wiser ways of doing life.” Eswine longs to cultivate a wisdom that knows “how to be quick to listen to another person, to be slow to speak, and slow to vent anger.”¹⁵ Missing among so many Christians who claim knowledge of a transcendent and immanent God is the practical know-how of living well with others. The world is longing for wisdom in an age of relational strife and emotional unhealth. The Church has been “found wanting.”¹³

Today’s Exemplar’s of Wisdom

If it is not Christian faculty that will serve as exemplars of wisdom for the sake of the Church, the university, and the world, then who is to be the model? We might be tempted to say that this is the

12. Tippet, *Becoming Wise*, 163.

13. Trevin Wax, “Mission in a Secular Age: A Conversation with James K. A. Smith,” *The Gospel Coalition Blog*, November 12, 2014, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/mission-in-a-secular-age-a-conversation-with-james-k-a-smith/>.

14. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2001), 134.

15. Zach Eswine, “Why Sage Christianity?: Because We Need Wiser Ways of Doing Life,” *Sage Christianity Blog*, 2021, <https://www.sagechristianity.com/about>.

13. Dan. 5:27 (English Standard Version).

job for clergy. After all, it is pastors that are typically the ones preaching, teaching, and shepherding those believers that make up the body of Christ. There is much that could be said about the need for wise pastors, just as there is much that could be said about the need for wise campus ministers in the parachurch context!

However, we must take a step back to ask: where are most clergy in the West educated? Before an aspiring pastor can begin a typical master's program at a theological seminary, they need an undergraduate degree from a college or university. Likewise, before a seminary professor can teach Biblical studies or even theology at a typical Christian seminary, they often must earn a PhD in the secular academy. Most of my instructors in my graduate program at Ashland Theological Seminary had attained degrees from prestigious academic institutions. My point is this: even if one were to conclude clergy today ought to be the primary exemplars of wisdom, who is teaching and shaping the pastors? Professors in the academy are shaping the lives of everyone in our society, including leaders in the Church.

The Church, the university, and the world are in desperate need. The need is not for more expert knowledge alone, as significant as that may be. The need is for wisdom. And if not for wise Christian professors, where else shall we turn? Philosopher Paul Gould has written, "Christian professors need to realize they are already witnesses whose lives and scholarship either help or hinder others' belief in God."¹⁶ Though we cannot claim that this program will cause every professor to fully arrive at the destination of wisdom, this program is a shared journey striving toward that end. We hope to make some significant progress along the way toward wisdom.

16. Paul M. Gould, "The Two Tasks Introduced," in *The Two Tasks of the Christian Scholar: Redeeming the Soul, Redeeming the Mind*, ed. William Lane Craig and Paul M. Gould (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 49.

Session 1: Discussion Questions

1. How does this essay sit with you? Why?
2. Do you relate to the idea that your work in the academy assumes the priority of the immanent or that it ignores or resists the transcendent? How so?
3. What do you think about the idea of living and working in a world now considered disenchanted? Does belief in an enchanted world seem to imply irrationality or blind faith?
4. What sort of feelings does this bring up in you? Does this essay elicit anger, shame, or other feelings? Does this essay provoke a desire for more wisdom?

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

As we slowly and prayerfully read this Scripture text together, we will read it four times with four movements. First, we will ask: "what does the text say?" Second, we will ask: "what does the text say to me?" Third, we will ask: "how might you respond to God in prayer?" Lastly, we will ask: "what is God inviting you to?"

"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. 1:9-10 ESV)

What is Wisdom? (Session 2)

I began by making a rather bold claim: what the Church, the university, and the world need most is wise Christian professors. This raises a critical question: what exactly is wisdom? If we are to set out on a journey searching for wisdom, it would help to have a clue of what we are looking for. If as Christians a core conviction is belief in the God of the Bible, and if we believe Scripture reveals truth about God and our world, then it is important that we begin by looking to the Bible for wisdom about wisdom!

Tremper Longman III, Distinguished Scholar of Biblical Studies at Westmont College, has written a significant book on the topic of Biblical wisdom entitled: *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*.¹⁷ If this program is to be a journey on the search for wisdom, Longman's work will provide a helpful topological map. What follows is an overview of some of the key features of Biblical wisdom that will help to orient the rest of our journey together.

Wisdom Books

Wisdom is not only a subject matter or theme broadly found in the Bible, but it has also been considered a distinct genre within Biblical literature. Due to the work of Biblical scholars such as Will Kynes, there has been recent debate about the viability of wisdom literature as a literary genre.¹⁸ Longman recognizes that Wisdom as a genre is not rigid, but rather a loose grouping of Biblical books with comparable characteristics.¹⁹ He argues that three canonical books in particular share a significant characteristic, in that their central theme is wisdom: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.²⁰ Though Longman recognizes that many Biblical books have something to say about wisdom, he begins with these three books as central to the Biblical witness regarding wisdom. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job have much to say about wisdom, yet all agree about one central idea: the fear of the Lord is wisdom. As simple as this idea may seem, Longman recognizes wisdom is complex, nuanced.²¹ Our interest will focus on Longman's discussion of the theme of wisdom in Proverbs, as he describes different dimensions or levels to this wisdom.

Wisdom is Practical

When reading the book of Proverbs, one recognizes quickly that wisdom is practical. Longman brings attention to several verses in Proverbs chapter 10, including: "When words are many,

17. Tremper Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

18. Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (Oxford, EN: Oxford University Press, 2019).

19. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 277.

20. Ibid., xv.

21. Ibid., 6.

transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.”²² The author of Proverbs suggests that there are times when excessive talk can be counter-productive at best, and that holding one’s tongue can be the best way forward. One might also wonder if faculty in the university today are particularly susceptible to the vice of excessive talk, but I digress. Longman uses this verse as an example to say that an important purpose of Proverbs “is to impart a practical kind of wisdom that helps a person to live life well.”²³

It ought not be missed or overlooked that a significant goal of wisdom is human flourishing; wisdom is about living life well. In other words, wisdom is not truly wisdom if it is too theoretical or intellectual to be practical. This means that if a university professor is not sufficiently able to make some connection between their expert knowledge and practical skill at living life well, then they have not adequately cultivated true wisdom. Perhaps an even more probing reflection is the possibility that even if one can make theoretical connections between expert knowledge and practical wisdom, a professor might not automatically be living in congruence with such wisdom. Wisdom that is practical must also be lived. Therefore, in this program we will be exploring in various practical ways how to live life well, as knowledgeable Christian faculty.

Wisdom is Ethical

Another dimension to wisdom is ethics. The purpose of Proverbs is not just to make someone “able to live life skillfully. Proverbs wants to make a person good as well as successful.”²⁴ At the very outset of Proverbs, the author says that wisdom promotes “righteousness, justice, and equity.”²⁵ Longman makes a case that wisdom has a substantial relationship with Torah, with the law. He demonstrates that wise living portrayed in Proverbs overlaps significantly with the Ten Commandments, particularly with those that deal with human relationships. Whether it be the teaching that God hates “hands that shed innocent blood” or “a false witness who breathes out lies,” it is apparent that wisdom in Proverbs is not just about successful living, it is about what is good and just.²⁶ “Righteousness and wisdom are interchangeable terms. One cannot be wise without being righteous. In the same way, folly and wickedness are inextricably intertwined.”²⁷

For a Christian professor today, it might be easier to find common ground with non-believing colleagues on the practical level of skills for success. Practical wisdom is less likely to be debated than issues of justice and virtue. The late philosopher Dallas Willard wrote in a work published in 2009: “We today live in a curious period when almost no one is willing to discuss the question of

22. Prov. 10:19 (English Standard Version).

23. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 7.

24. Ibid., 10.

25. Prov. 1:3 (English Standard Version).

26. Prov. 6:17-18 (English Standard Version).

27. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 11.

how one becomes a truly good person.”²⁸ Professors in the university setting often do have something practical to say about how one becomes a successful person. Depending on the academic discipline or the issue at hand, university professors and administrators often have something to say about ethics, even if their ethical positions seem to contradict a Biblical understanding of reality and are not often grounded in a coherent worldview. However, Willard’s observation is as relevant as ever: the secular university does not sufficiently offer practical skills in becoming a good person from the inside out. The university typically offers various kinds of classes on professional ethics, generally good in and of itself, but one wonders if such classes alone can holistically create ethical people. This program seeks to help Christian faculty both to explore and to live this ethical dimension of wisdom, rooted in Christian Scripture and tradition.

Wisdom is Theological

Longman notes that many who study Proverbs get so absorbed in the practical and ethical dimensions of wisdom that they overlook the theological level of wisdom. Longman argues that the following verse near the opening of Proverbs is foundational to our understanding of wisdom: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”²⁹ One can argue that there is hardly a more offensive claim one could make to contemporary academic sensibilities. One reason for offense is that Proverbs regularly uses God’s covenantal name, *Yahweh*, rather than a more generic term for God.³⁰ Wisdom is related to, and comes specifically from, the God of the Bible; this insinuates an exclusivism that has become difficult for many to digest today.

Another reason for the offensiveness of wisdom in Proverbs is its teaching of the appropriateness of fear of this God. In our contemporary context, if belief in God is permitted in public life, it does not tend to be a God that inspires human fear. Clarifying the nature of this fear in Proverbs, Longman writes: “Perhaps the closest English word is ‘awe,’ but even that word does not quite get it. The ‘fear’ of the ‘fear of the Lord’ is the sense of standing before the God who created everything, including humans whose very continued existence depends on him. The emotion is appropriate for wisdom because it demonstrates acknowledgment that God is much greater than we are... such fear breeds humility.”³¹ Longman does not argue that this is the only appropriate emotion a wise person has towards God, but fear of God must have its place in a truly wise life. Integrated with this theological level of wisdom as seen in Proverbs, is one’s emotions toward the God of the Bible. Wisdom not only requires orthodoxy (right thinking), or even orthopraxy (right doing), but also orthopathy (right or appropriate feeling).

28. Dallas Willard, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009), 49.

29. Prov. 1:7 (English Standard Version).

30. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 175.

31. Ibid., 12-13.

The interrelated nature of these three levels of wisdom is now apparent. Wisdom is practical, involving one's emotional maturity and skill. It is ethical, involving virtue and development of character. Additionally, as Christians we must conclude that wisdom is also theological. "While wisdom entails study, hard work, and practice to implement, the ultimate source is God. In that sense, wisdom is revelatory. Apart from God there is no true wisdom."³²

Wisdom is Missional

Continuing to develop our understanding of wisdom beyond the three levels seen in Longman's discussion of Proverbs, we must also recognize the missional nature of wisdom. When we see in Proverbs that true wisdom comes from the God of Israel, and that wisdom involves a right relationship with this God, then it is important that we expand upon this theological dimension of wisdom.

According to Christopher J.H. Wright, the God of the Bible can be described as the "God of mission."³³ The God of the Bible is not passive or absent from creation but is actively at work; God is a God on mission. Wright summarizes the mission of God as "the story of how God in his sovereign love has purposed to bring the sinful world of his fallen creation to the redeemed world of his new creation."³⁴ The people of God have an important role to play in God's story. Michael Goheen has written that "God's chosen people do not exist for themselves. Rather, they exist for the sake of God's glory and his mission, and for the sake of others toward whom God's mission is directed."³⁵

If the story of the Bible is a true, unified story about God's desire to restore all of creation, and if God's people have an important role to play, then what role does God's wisdom play in this story? Wright argues that when Israel lives faithfully and ethically according to the Law, their way of life will demonstrate their wisdom and will draw people to their God. Wright points us to the book of Deuteronomy:

Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great

32. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 122.

33. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 71.

34. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 46.

35. Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 26.

nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?³⁶

Faithful obedience to God displays an attractive wisdom to the watching world. Wright argues that wisdom is a bridge-builder between the people of God and those on the outside. The way of life of God's people is to display God's wisdom and is meant to offer a pathway for outsiders to join in worship of Israel's God.³⁷ Israel's wisdom not only allows them to cooperate with God in his mission to restore all creation, but it is also meant to influence the nations around them.

In our pursuit of wisdom, we do well to remember the larger context of wisdom in God's story. Just as the wisdom of Israel was meant to build bridges to surrounding nations so that they could join to worship the one true God, so also the wisdom of Christian professors is meant to build bridges for non-believers in the campus community to be drawn to the saving work of Christ. Christian professors in the secular university must pursue a life of wisdom, not as an end in itself, but in order to participate in God's plan to restore all of creation, and to offer a pathway for outsiders to be drawn by wisdom to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. "Christian professors ought to be missional professors."³⁸ Our cultivation of wisdom must incorporate thought and practice in exercising this influence for Christ.

Wisdom is Formational

As we have seen, wisdom in the Biblical context is more than (though certainly not less than) attaining expert knowledge or skills for success. Another way of understanding the various dimensions of wisdom is to see that wisdom is formational. Wisdom is about the kind of person we are becoming; it is about an integrated life, rather than a compartmentalized life. Though there are many, slightly varying definitions of Christian spiritual formation, Kenneth Boa describes spiritual formation well: "the grace-driven developmental process in which the soul grows in conformity to the image of Christ."³⁹ This developmental process of spiritual formation is in many ways parallel to the cultivation of wisdom.

New Testament scholar Gordon Fee has argued persuasively that a misunderstanding of spiritual formation is to mistake the idea of "spiritual" for what is immaterial. Rather, a Christian understanding of spiritual formation must incorporate the work and person of the Holy Spirit;

36. Deut. 4:6-7 (English Standard Version).

37. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 448.

38. Paul M Gould, *The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 6.

39. Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 515.

spiritual formation is about the sanctifying work of the Spirit.⁴⁰ Willard has noted that, in another sense, all of one's life is their spiritual life.⁴¹ Spiritual formation is about the work of God's Spirit in every area of life. Spiritual formation does involve human intentionality and effort, but our formation is ultimately driven by the Holy Spirit, and any progress one makes in Christ-likeness is a gift of God's grace.⁴²

Just as the Spirit is central to the process of spiritual formation, the Spirit is also integral to the pursuit of true wisdom. Though we will explore Jesus' relationship with wisdom in the next session, Longman notes several passages in the Old Testament that make a close connection between wisdom and the Spirit.⁴³ In Genesis, Pharaoh recognizes that "the spirit of God" has made Joseph "discerning and wise."⁴⁴ The narrator of Deuteronomy recognizes that Joshua was "full of the spirit of wisdom."⁴⁵ Strikingly, Isaiah speaks of the coming Messiah in this way: "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD."⁴⁶ And so we end this session where we began; the spirit of wisdom is coupled with the fear of the Lord. Any growth in wisdom that Christian faculty achieve is ultimately because of God's grace at work by the Holy Spirit, displayed in a life of fear of the Lord. The formational nature of wisdom means spiritual practices and disciplines will not be just unnecessary fluff, but will be essential to the cultivation of wisdom.

These dimensions or features of wisdom will together serve as a touchstone for everything else we will discuss in this program. The Church, the university, and the world need wise Christian professors. In our next session we will explore how Jesus Christ is our model of wisdom.

40. Gordon Fee, "On Getting the Spirit Back into Spirituality," in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 36-37.

41. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 18.

42. *Ibid.*, 23.

43. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 255.

44. Gen. 41:38-39 (English Standard Version).

45. Deut. 34:9 (English Standard Version).

46. Is. 11:2 (English Standard Version).

Session 2: Discussion Questions

1. Is there a dimension of wisdom that surprised you or resonated most with you? How so?
2. What do you think about the Biblical witness that true wisdom begins with fear or awe of the God of the Bible? Do you find that challenging or inspiring?
3. What do you think of the idea that the secular university is lacking in the ability to form good or virtuous people? Does this issue intersect with your work, whether directly or indirectly?
4. What is one idea you might want to explore further, or one practical application you might want to implement?

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

As we slowly and prayerfully read this Scripture text together, we will read it four times with four movements. First, we will ask: "what does the text say?" Second, we will ask: "what does the text say to me?" Third, we will ask: "how might you respond to God in prayer?" Lastly, we will ask: "what is God inviting you to?"

"Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." (Ps. 100:1-5 ESV)

Jesus the Sage (Session 3)

Is Jesus Wise?

Considering all the dimensions of wisdom we discussed in our last session, it is entirely understandable if this call to become a wise Christian professor seems a bit too much. One might stand to wonder: in this call to become wise Christian professors, are faculty in the secular university being asked to do more, and to become more, than the incarnate Jesus was in his own social context? Jesus might have been able to live a holy life, he might have been able to perform miraculous healings, he might have been able to overcome sin and death on the cross, and he might have been able to raise from the dead, but was he the most truly wise person to have ever lived? Consider the famous words of the late philosopher Dallas Willard:

Our commitment to Jesus can stand on no other foundation than a recognition that he is the one who knows the truth about our lives and the universe. It is not possible to trust Jesus, or anyone else, in matters where we do not believe him to be competent. We cannot pray for his help and rely on his collaboration in dealing with real life matters we suspect might defeat his knowledge or abilities...Once you stop to think about it, how could he be what we take him to be in all other respects and not be the best informed and most intelligent person of all, the smartest person who ever lived? That is exactly how his earliest apprentices in kingdom living thought of him.⁴⁷

Notice that Willard does not locate Jesus' competency and knowledge within the realm of the category that many today call "religion." The wisdom of Jesus is not limited to matters of salvation and life after death. His wisdom is not limited to matters of spirituality and how one might pray. His wisdom is not limited to matters of social justice and equity. Rather, the wisdom of Jesus includes all of this; it transcends all of life.

New Testament scholar, Jonathan Pennington, laments that even mature Christians today are likely to limit Jesus to the realm of "religion." He says that we conceive of our lives like a chest of drawers. Just as we have different drawers for socks, t-shirts, and underwear, we conceive of different drawers for our finances, relationships, health, education, and faith. As helpful as a chest of drawers is for organizing our clothes (I admit I get a strange joy in organizing my no-show socks in a separate drawer from my quarter-length socks), the chest of drawers is anything but helpful as a metaphor for compartmentalizing our fragmented lives. "Humans are organic beings who thrive only when the many parts of our lives are connected together. Our bodies, our minds, our emotions, our habits, our praying, our relationships - all of these are intimately related. They cannot be compartmentalized, at least not if we want to thrive."⁴⁸ We cannot attain true wisdom if we

47. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1998), 94.

48. Jonathan T. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2020), 11.

presuppose that Jesus is only relevant to a particular sphere of life. In his brilliant book, Pennington argues that Christianity is not just a religion, it is a philosophy of life.

The Sage in Ancient Israel

Before exploring the possibility of Jesus fulfilling the role of sage or philosopher, we do well to consider the possibility of such a role or office existing in ancient Israel. There has long been an understanding that in different eras of Israel's history, there were various people who fulfilled the professional roles of prophets, priests, and kings. However, what is not often considered is the possibility that there existed another significant, recognized role in ancient Israel: that of the sage. Longman demonstrates that many women and men in the Old Testament were described as wise, while there are others who were portrayed as counselors that gave wise advice.⁴⁹

The most compelling case for the sage as a recognized role in ancient Israel is from the book Jeremiah, in which Jeremiah's critics say: "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet."⁵⁰ Note how "the wise" is sandwiched between the recognized roles of priest and prophet. Though Longman acknowledges this is not definitive evidence, he goes on to say: "the textual evidence appears to support the idea of a distinct professional group known as sages, and the professional sage in neighboring cultures supports the idea."⁵¹ If this is the case, it is hard to imagine another role in ancient Israel that would more closely parallel the role of today's university professor than the sage.

Jesus a Jewish Sage

It is indisputable that there were both men and women in ancient Israel described as wise. Additionally, it is entirely possible that the Jewish sage was a recognized role at points in Israel's history. We would do well to consider, then, how Jesus might have fulfilled the role of a Jewish sage. In the gospels one could begin in Luke and find Jesus as a youth: "And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him."⁵² Longman notes that in the story that follows in Luke's gospel, Jesus' wisdom is then demonstrated as a boy in the Jerusalem temple. Luke describes Jesus as sitting among the Jewish teachers, both listening and asking questions (marks of wisdom) while also providing his own answers.⁵³ "The amazed reaction of the audience is the first of many such accounts."⁵⁴ Before Jesus even began his adult ministry, those who encountered Jesus were taken aback by his wisdom.

49. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 195.

50. Jer. 18:18 (English Standard Version).

51. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 196.

52. Lk. 2:40 (English Standard Version).

53. Lk. 2:46-47 (English Standard Version).

54. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 244.

One might wonder what the apostle Paul, the “Hebrew of Hebrews,”⁵⁵ might have to say about the relationship between Jesus Christ and wisdom. In the Pauline epistles, one finds that “Jesus is the very embodiment of God’s wisdom.”⁵⁶ In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, Jesus is the one that demonstrates the mystery of God through his wisdom.⁵⁷ Likewise, in 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks about the cross of Christ as the wisdom of God, in contrast to the false wisdom of the world.⁵⁸ These examples from the epistles, along with evidence from the gospels, make a compelling case that in the New Testament, Jesus is “the ultimate sage.”⁵⁹

The evidence for Jesus as Jewish sage is not limited to New Testament references in which Jesus is explicitly described as wise. Jesus was a master of what has been called “critical wisdom.” Mark McMinn, in conversation with MaryKate Morse, has written that there are two kinds of wisdom seen in the Bible: conventional wisdom and critical wisdom.⁶⁰ Conventional wisdom is the primary kind of wisdom that one finds in the book of Proverbs. Conventional wisdom is not intended to be a promise or a guarantee of “living long and prospering,” but provides practical insight about how one might produce generally good outcomes in most situations.⁶¹

However, it is not uncommon for conventional wisdom to be misapplied, particularly by those who are perceived to be wise in the community, such as the “friends” of Job or the Pharisees in the first century. This is where critical wisdom comes into play; Jesus is a master of critical wisdom. Critical wisdom recognizes that conventional wisdom can be misapplied. “Throughout the Sermon on the Mount Jesus repeated, ‘You have heard it said...but I say to you.’ He rocked the boat.”⁶² The nature of Jesus’ teaching and ministry often involves bringing critical wisdom to bear to counter wrongly-prioritized conventional wisdom. McMinn continues:

Jesus, the perfect image of God, is the master of critical wisdom. He didn’t come to abolish conventional wisdom but to enliven it, to flesh out the greatest commandments of loving God and loving neighbor as self, to remind us of life’s deep mystery, to call us back to fear and awe of God when we so easily settle for

55. Phil. 3:5 (English Standard Version).

56. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 245.

57. Col. 2:2-3 (English Standard Version).

58. 1 Cor. 1:24 (English Standard Version).

59. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 250.

60. Mark R. McMinn, *The Science of Virtue: Why Positive Psychology Matters to the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017), 21.

61. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 42.

62. McMinn, *The Science of Virtue*, 23.

religion composed of cognitive beliefs and behavioral lists that make us feel holier than others.⁶³

When considering the Old Testament and the historical context of first century Israel, Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as the ultimate Jewish sage. Jesus discerned, taught, and lived critical wisdom in context of the competing, conventional Jewish wisdom of his day. However, we must ask, is the wisdom of Jesus only relevant in a first century Jewish context? How might the wisdom of Jesus Christ intersect with the wider Greco-Roman world that greatly valued the wisdom of its own philosophers?

Jesus the Great Philosopher

Philosophy means “the love of wisdom.” Sadly, if you asked a typical student walking across campus today what they really thought of philosophy, they are likely to remark that philosophy is mostly irrelevant speculations about questions that have no answer. Pennington notes that many today think of philosophy as pondering questions like: “Does this chair exist once we leave this room? How would we know this?”⁶⁴ To many today, if philosophy is the love of anything, it is the love of useless speculations. This being the case, philosophy can appear to be a novelty for people who would rather ponder impractical theory than to develop real world knowledge and skill towards ends that really matter in this world.

In contrast, Pennington goes on to say that philosophy in the ancient Greek and Roman world was so much more than this, it was about learning a way of life, it was about exploring what it means for human beings to flourish.⁶⁵ Because of the likes of Plato and Socrates, philosophy became focused on exploring “a comprehensive understanding of all the world.”⁶⁶ Philosophy was not about irrelevant speculations, it was a bedrock for the flourishing of individuals and society at large.⁶⁷ In the next session we will seek to trace the history of philosophy and its journey to perceived irrelevance in the university setting, and why that history matters to every other academic discipline in the university today, but for now we will explore the idea that the wisdom of Jesus was relevant to the understanding of wisdom in the Greco-Roman world.

If you sat down with a typical Christian involved in most any evangelical church in America today, and you asked them to describe Jesus, you might hear many good and accurate descriptions, but it would be unlikely to hear Jesus described as a great philosopher. It is critical to understand that this was not always the case in the history of the Church. As the gospel spread and the Church grew

63. McMinn, *The Science of Virtue*, 26.

64. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher*, 17.

65. Ibid., 21.

66. Ibid., 22.

67. Ibid., 18.

throughout the Greco-Roman world in the first few centuries, we do well to consider how a growing number of non-Jewish Christians perceived Jesus. Pennington has demonstrated that one of the most common ways for Christians in the early church to portray Jesus in their artwork was to portray Jesus in the garb of a Greek philosopher!⁶⁸ But Jesus was not only portrayed as a philosopher by artists in the early Church, but he was also spoken of in a similar manner by many of the early Church fathers. Pennington notes that important leaders and thinkers such as Justin Martyr, John Chrysostom, and Augustine spoke and wrote about Jesus as a philosopher who had the answers to the great questions that the great philosophers raised.⁶⁹

We explored above how the canonical gospels demonstrate how Jesus utilized critical wisdom to critique and correct the misapplied conventional wisdom of the Jewish teachers and religious leaders of his day. Additionally, Pennington argues that the existence of the gospels themselves is evidence that early Christians conceived of Jesus as a philosopher. The canonical gospels are best understood as fitting within the genre of the ancient biography. When one considers the kinds of people that had biographies written of them in antiquity, one of the most prominent was philosophers. The biography of Socrates, for example, was written by Plato. "This is the first clue that the Gospels are presenting Jesus as a philosopher: simply, the form and content of the Gospels very closely resemble the many *Lives* that were written about other ancient philosophers...this connection between the Gospels and the biographies of philosophers was universally accepted in the early church."⁷⁰ The ancient world did not narrowly conceive of Jesus as a "religious teacher" as many consider him today.

Jesus Christ is the great philosopher, the great lover of wisdom. It is imperative that we recognize that this does not mean Jesus was great at speculating about matters irrelevant to life. In fact, a philosopher in the Greco-Roman world would not have been esteemed or taken seriously if they did not also live out and embody their philosophy among others in the community. The true philosopher needed to live in such a way that they became the lead example of what they taught.⁷¹ True wisdom is always lived, not just taught.

Conclusion

No one has practiced what they preached quite like Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ultimate sage, the ultimate philosopher. Therefore, as Christian faculty seek to grow in wisdom, they are not pursuing a call above and beyond the model of their Lord but are merely following in the footsteps of their Savior. If Christian professors do not seek to grow in their love of wisdom, one might ask, who will?

68. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher*, 57.

69. Ibid., 59.

70. Ibid., 60.

71. Ibid., 61.

Session 3: Discussion Questions

1. How are you experiencing this call to be a wise Christian professor? Does it feel daunting? Inspiring?
2. Do you typically imagine that Jesus Christ is more intelligent and knowledgeable about your discipline than anyone else in your field? Why or why not?
3. Do you notice in yourself a desire to have a better comprehensive understanding of life in the manner of Jesus? Why or why not?
4. What is one idea you might want to explore further, or one practical application you might want to implement?

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

As we slowly and prayerfully read this Scripture text together, we will read it four times with four movements. First, we will ask: "what does the text say?" Second, we will ask: "what does the text say to me?" Third, we will ask: "how might you respond to God in prayer?" Lastly, we will ask: "what is God inviting you to?"

"And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.'" (Lk. 6:20-23 ESV)

Wisdom and the Academy (Session 4)

What is a PhD?

Historian George Marsden, author of a landmark work entitled *The Soul of the American University* has written: "While American universities today allow individuals free exercise of religion in parts of their lives that do not touch the heart of the university, they tend to exclude or discriminate against relating explicit religious perspectives to intellectual life."⁷² How is it today that a university professor at a significant public institution like Ohio State might become an expert in their narrow field of study, but for their wisdom to be underdeveloped? How can this be if philosophy was the bedrock of ancient Greco-Roman civilization and if wisdom was central to ancient Hebrew culture? And how is it that institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton began as explicitly Christian institutions of higher learning but are now dominated by secularism? The answers to such questions are, as one might expect, complex. At the risk of over-simplifying the story, in this session we will seek to trace some of the history behind the loss of wisdom as integral to higher education in the West, and Christian wisdom in particular.

It is worth taking a moment to consider the origin of the typical qualification for becoming a professor in most academic disciplines in today's university setting: the Doctor of Philosophy. Pennington, reflecting on the origin of the degree, writes: "The 'doctor' part refers to the highest level of learning and the ability to teach others. The 'philosophy' refers to the most important thing to learn: wisdom (*sophia*). So PhDs are lovers of wisdom, lovers of the most comprehensive understanding of the world, summed up with the word 'philosophy.' We still have PhDs today, but a lot has changed."⁷³ At its origin, those rare people able to attain a PhD were not expected solely to be experts in their narrow academic field (as good and significant as that is), they were expected to have expert knowledge in connection with a broader wisdom that was comprehensive to life. "Wisdom extends to the whole of human and cultural life."⁷⁴ However, the university today with its plethora of disconnected academic disciplines, might be better described as a "multiversity."⁷⁵ To understand the story of the American university, we must start in antiquity.

Ancient Alexandria

A co-founder of the Society of Christian Philosophers, Arthur Holmes wrote that ancient Greek and Roman higher-learning was not strictly divided into fragmented academic disciplines but was focused on a more holistic development of virtuous people, people with the power and skill to

72. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 6.

73. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher*, 20.

74. Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 40.

75. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 419.

persuade others toward the good life as it was understood in their culture. Following Socrates and Plato, an example is seen in a figure named Isocrates. Though Isocrates had a particular interest in rhetoric, "his educational goal of developing the whole person – intellectually, mentally, aesthetically, politically – captured fourth century Greece and spread throughout the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, leading to the creation of a broadly educated, cultured people."⁷⁶

As the gospel spread across the Roman empire several centuries later, Christians found themselves needing to decide how they might uphold Biblical wisdom while engaging highly respected pagan learning in their cultural context. From an early stage, Christian leaders and intellectuals wrestled with the relevance of Greek philosophy for a Christian understanding of wisdom.⁷⁷ In one such example, as the church grew in a key center of higher learning, the Egyptian city of Alexandria, Christians sought to engage the intellectual elites of their city. Clement of Alexandria played a critical role in this engagement, having been well-educated in the city, as he "wanted to bring all available learning into service of Christ...Christianity was the true *paideia*, fulfilling education's ethical purpose to a higher degree than ever before, because the incarnate Logos was God's wise and powerful rhetoric addressed to all."⁷⁸ Through Church fathers like Clement and Origen in Alexandria, Christians began to integrate the teaching of the Old and New Testaments with the pagan philosophy of their day, emphasizing a "unity of truth" centered on Christ. The sciences were understood to trace the wise order of God's creation, while the arts were the wise enrichment of God's beauty.⁷⁹ As early Christian intellectuals sought to bring together the best of Greco-Roman wisdom with Biblical wisdom, the love of wisdom in higher learning was about developing the whole person in light of an understanding of all of reality. It is this unity of truth, grounded in Christian wisdom, that became the foundation for the university in the West as we know it.

Monastic Schools

As Rome fell and many traditional schools were overrun, and as the Church ascended in prominence, monasticism took on a critical role in the preservation of culture and the continuation of learning. In many ways, monastic communities were guardians and gardeners of wisdom. Monastery schools became places where monks not only worked and prayed but also where monks paid great attention to learning. Monasteries became the place where one learned to love learning, while one learned to love God.⁸⁰

76. Arthur Frank Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 13.

77. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 34.

78. Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy*, 16-17.

79. *Ibid.*, 20.

80. *Ibid.*, 36.

Two examples illustrate the importance of monasticism as a preserver of wisdom in higher learning in Western society. One such example is the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux in the 12th century. Bernard did not solely do research and teach material; he lived life with his students. As he gave advice and instruction, he also modeled what he taught with great effect. Even as his pupils moved on from his instruction, Bernard maintained sincere friendships with them. In many ways Bernard became a medieval example of a Christ-like professor.⁸¹

Another 13th century example of the monastics' cultivation of wisdom would be that of Bonaventure. Having learned at the relatively new university in Paris, Bonaventure was highly educated; he was also selected to become head of the Franciscan order. Though Bonaventure understood theology to be the academic discipline that integrated all fields of learning, he also supported the study of nature and the arts, because these fields of learning pointed beyond themselves to Christ.⁸² Bonaventure wrote eloquently of the pitfalls of learning, particularly of learning as an end apart from God. To overcome such a pitfall, one needed to grow in three key virtues: "faith in the eternal Word, hope that heeds the inspired Word, and love that delights in the Word incarnate."⁸³ For Bonaventure, intellectual learning and the virtuous life must go hand-in-hand.

The Reformation

From the early Church throughout the medieval period, the relationship between Biblical wisdom and ancient Greek philosophy continued to exist at least somewhat paradoxically. Marsden notes that the reformers were highly educated. Luther and Calvin's critique of the late medieval Roman Catholic Church was not by nature anti-intellectual but was based upon both the spiritual experiences and the insights of scholars.⁸⁴ Luther and Calvin re-emphasized learning in the university setting and maintained the university's goal to integrate the wisdom of Greek philosophers with Reformed doctrine. "Very early in the Reformation, Zwingli and Luther began wearing the scholar's gown...in villages throughout Protestant lands for centuries to come, the clergyman would be the best educated citizen and education would be a key to his authority."⁸⁵ It is significant to note the place of higher education in reinforcing the authority of Christian clergy in Western society, including among those that would eventually colonize what is now the United States.

81. Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy*, 37.

82. *Ibid.*, 44.

83. *Ibid.*, 46.

84. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 36.

85. *Ibid.*, 37.

The Ivy League

Harvard College, the first of its kind in what would become the United States, was created primarily as a place of learning for Puritan clergy.⁸⁶ Influenced by the Calvinist doctrine of “common grace” as it recognized that the grace of God extends (at least partially) to all people and places, Harvard sought also to include Ancient Greek learning in its curriculum.⁸⁷ A college founded to educate Christian clergy was bound to eventually face increasing tension, however, by taking serious the learning and claims to truth that existed in pagan philosophy, even as it simultaneously sought to enshrine the primacy of Christian theology and Biblical wisdom. In other words, the tension that Clement of Alexandria was able to hold at the turn of the third century by locating pagan learning as a compliment to the unifying Christian story, became a tension that was increasingly difficult to hold at the dawn of the Enlightenment.

Yale was founded in 1701, at least in part because a segment of Puritan church leaders had decided that Harvard’s emphasis on the inclusion of pagan learning had led to theological drift.⁸⁸ The founders of Yale had reacted with such a firm commitment to distinctly Calvinist and Congregational theology that those Christians that found themselves excluded at Yale eventually helped to found Princeton (with ties to Presbyterianism) in 1746.⁸⁹ Because mid-18th century Yale was perceived to be strictly sectarian (Puritanical in its contemporary connotation), those who founded colleges like Columbia in New York City wrote into their charters the idea that Columbia’s faculty would not be required to adhere to the specific theology of any particular denomination, even as Columbia would simultaneously seek to enshrine Christian morality in accordance with its ties to the Church of England.⁹⁰

Into the 20th Century

This commitment to academic freedom from the control of a particular church body, however noble the intent, subtly set the American university on a trajectory that would slowly but surely draw Christian theology and Biblical wisdom to the margins of the academy. It must be noted that the Christian founders of Princeton and Columbia, for example, could never have imagined that they were establishing institutions that would enshrine secularism, making Christianity antithetical to public knowledge. Even at the turn of the 20th century, universities with a Methodist heritage such as Syracuse and Northwestern had not rejected religion outright but sought to hold on to a generic God and Christian morals without dependence upon the authority of Christian Scripture, which had been rejected.⁹¹

86. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 41.

87. *Ibid.*, 43.

88. *Ibid.*, 52.

89. *Ibid.*, 57.

90. *Ibid.*, 58.

91. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 268.

A critical ingredient in the marginalization of Christian theology and philosophy in the American academy at the turn of the 20th century happened for pragmatic reasons: the professionalization of the university. "In addition to worries about the potential disruptiveness of specific Christian teachings, the ongoing pressure for professionalization helped steer the rapid university expansion away from religious concerns... At the same time, because the most lucrative function of the universities was their service to capitalist society in providing technical expertise, much of the expansion of programs would be in areas where religion was of little concern."⁹² Christian wisdom was not always rejected outright, it was simply seen as irrelevant or impractical. This process was only exacerbated at public institutions like The Ohio State University, where an emphasis on the separation of church and state increasingly saw any reference to Jesus Christ or Christian Scripture as an infringement.⁹³

Conclusion

The ancient Church had found ways to integrate the respected, pagan learning of the Greco-Roman world with a Christian understanding of reality, centered around the person of Christ. It was the Church that founded most of the institutions of higher learning in the West, including the most elite universities in what is now the United States. The marginalization of Christian wisdom in the academy in many ways began as the result of disagreements among Christians themselves about how Christian teaching should be taught and enforced in university life. Coupled with the rise of capitalism and the professionalization of the university in the modern world, Christian wisdom was eventually seen as irrelevant at best to the goals of the modern university. Faith was relegated to the private lives of those that dared hold onto myth. One can argue that neither the Church nor the academy today recognizes the gravity of what was lost in this arrangement.

92. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 270.

93. J.E. Pollard, *William Oxley Thompson: Evangel of Education* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1955), 151.

Session 4: Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything that strikes you about the historical background of the PhD degree related to Christian wisdom?
2. What stands out as significant from this historical sketch related to Christian wisdom and higher learning? Why?
3. What might be some implications of university professors replacing Christian clergy as the most educated people in Western society?
4. What is one idea you might want to explore further, or one practical application you might want to implement?

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

As we slowly and prayerfully read this Scripture text together, we will read it four times with four movements. First, we will ask: “what does the text say?” Second, we will ask: “what does the text say to me?” Third, we will ask: “how might you respond to God in prayer?” Lastly, we will ask: “what is God inviting you to?”

“The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Prov. 1:1-7 ESV)

The Story of God (Session 5)

Wisdom and God's Story

The cultivation of wise professors must involve an appreciation of the theological nature of wisdom. Philosopher Paul Gould notes that it is rare that Christian professors have practiced their academic work from a distinctly Christian framework, but rather have been shaped to view life in the academy without reference to God.⁹⁴ It is typical for a Christian professor to accept foundational assumptions regarding their discipline that are derived from a secular worldview; it is common for professors to do their work living in a story in which God seems to be irrelevant at best to their academic discipline. As we saw in a previous session entitled "What is Wisdom?," the Old and New Testaments and the book of Proverbs in particular make the claim that wisdom is not secular but is theological and particular to the people of God.⁹⁵ In other words, wisdom and folly are ultimately theological categories, and so to be truly wise one must live in right relationship to God. "Without right relationship to God we cannot rightly relate to life, to neighbors, to family, to the community, to strangers, and to the earth."⁹⁶ In this session we will seek to lay out a Christ-centered orientation to the world, highlighting some features of the Bible as the true story of the world.

There are undeniably various ways to tell the story of God. Each telling of the story has its own strengths and weaknesses. One common and more succinct way of telling the true story of the world in four acts has been called "CFRR" (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration).⁹⁷ Another widely used paradigm presented by clergyman Vaughan Roberts has focused on the theme of "kingdom," as seen in eight acts.⁹⁸ For our purposes, the six-act telling presented by Bartholomew and Goheen (in conversation with the work of N.T. Wright) in *The Drama of Scripture* will serve as our template.⁹⁹

Act 1: Creation

When considering the Biblical drama it is easy to be quickly sidetracked by the controversy (at least in Christian circles) of evolution. Though there can be worthwhile practical questions raised about

94. Paul M Gould, *The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 6.

95. Tremper Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 25.

96. R. Paul Stevens and Michael Green, *Living the Story: Biblical Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 79.

97. Gould, *The Outrageous Idea*, 14.

98. Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012).

99. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

how the teaching of evolution might undermine Biblical authority, the debate can distract from our understanding of what the Spirit-inspired writer of Genesis intended. "We need to focus as much on the way in which the story is told as on the details themselves."¹⁰⁰ Put another way: "The question is not whether the Bible tells the truth, but how it tells it."¹⁰¹ Much ink has been spilled throughout the centuries on the doctrine of creation, but we will highlight two key features of the story.

First, the creation account assumes that one God exists, but does not make a philosophical argument for God's existence. As Bartholomew and Goheen write, the purpose of Genesis 1 and 2 is not to convince us of monotheism but to introduce us to the Creator in a similar manner to how one might be introduced to an artist of a work one already appreciates.¹⁰² The creation account portrays God as a great artist with complete ability to create a masterpiece; creation is originally good, orderly, and without flaw. "Order means that there is a proper function for everything and a proper relationship that it bears to everything else."¹⁰³ The portrayal of God in Genesis as an orderly artist and of the universe as God's purposeful masterpiece is a significant foundation for human knowledge. This creation account could serve as a basis and point of reference for every academic discipline in the academy.

Second, humankind is the climax of creation, as all human beings are made in the image of God. This understanding is critical to a proper understanding of anthropology. The Western understanding of human rights assumes that human beings have a unique dignity and worth that is priceless, yet this is borrowed from the Biblical story.¹⁰⁴ Human beings are created with derived authority to be caretakers of God's creation; it is humankind's responsibility to be stewards of God's good world. Human beings have both the freedom and responsibility to make choices in congruence with their God-given role. One of the most rejected elements today of the creation account is the idea that human beings are objectively accountable to any ultimate authority, yet the authority of God over humanity is essential to the story.

Act 2: Fall

Bartholomew and Goheen write that, "the third chapter of Genesis does tell us reliably about the mysterious origin of evil in God's world. It was rooted in the mutiny of the first human couple. They were tempted, and they succumbed, with catastrophic consequences."¹⁰⁵ The first human beings had a real choice and a real responsibility to uphold the boundaries that God set out for them.

100. Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 28.

101. Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 92.

102. Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 29.

103. Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 93.

104. Gould, *The Outrageous Idea*, 16.

105. Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 39-40.

God's moral standards from the beginning are rooted in the goodness of God; God's moral boundaries are always toward human flourishing and the flourishing of God's world. Yet, it is important to recognize that the idea of disobeying God did not originate within the first human beings, but that the serpent mysteriously represents the tempting power of personal evil that coincided with the fall. Though human beings are responsible and accountable to God, whatever is broken within them did not originate with God's design nor even within human beings alone. The fall happened because evil exists, despite the reality that we "are not told where the talking serpent comes from or who he is."¹⁰⁶

Regarding the fall, Robert E. Webber writes: "The dark tide of evil and death envelops all creatures, all creation, all culture-making, all cities and all of civilization. Humanity is paralyzed in a condition of alienation from God, from each other and from ourselves."¹⁰⁷ The implication of this pervasive brokenness is that the university is also touched by the fall. Each academic discipline is not only warranted considering the creation story but has also been tainted and impaired by the fall. Part of the role of the professors in the secular academy is to diligently discern how the stories that shape their academic discipline have been twisted by evil toward harming image bearers and God's creation.¹⁰⁸

Act 3: God's Missionary People Called

Thankfully, God does not give up on God's creation nor on God's image bearers. God begins a redemptive process by making a covenant with Abraham and his descendants that they might be a blessing to all peoples. This chapter in the story starts off well because Abraham's response to God contrasts Adam and Eve in the garden: Abraham trusts God. Abraham's descendants are to be a unique people, distinct from the nations who have all gone off course because of the fall. Israel is called to be in right relationship with the one true God, "to form a culture and influence civilization according to his purposes."¹⁰⁹

The strength of this six-act telling of the story is that it emphasizes that the people of God have a significant role to play in God's plan of redemption. God's people are invited to play a part in the drama. However much God remains the primary protagonist of the story, the people of God are far more than insignificant bystanders. Their role is no less significant after the fall than it was before. It must be noted that the vocation of a Christian professor ought to be grounded in this story. "From the beginning God's people are to be 'missionary.' They are chosen to be a channel of blessing to

106. Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 40.

107. Robert E. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World? Contending for the Christian Story in an Age of Rivals* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 30.

108. Gould, *The Outrageous Idea*, 20.

109. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, 30.

others. But in order to be a missionary people they have to be formed to be like the promise they carry.”¹¹⁰

Much of the rest of the Old Testament is the story of Israel’s failures to be formed by God to live in congruence with God’s character. Though the people of God have a significant role to play to influence the nations around them, they are inversely too often influenced by these idolatrous nations. “Israel, the people who bear God’s solution for the world’s problems, is itself a part of the problem.”¹¹¹ As centuries pass and as Israel is disciplined for its own idolatrous disobedience by being exiled from the promised land, God reveals to the prophets that a new covenant is coming. “The Messiah, the anointed one, will come, and Israel will be genuinely converted, the hearts of the people turned to God at last.”¹¹²

Act 4: Jesus the Ultimate Missionary

Paul Gould writes: “Each event and sub-theme within the Old Testament weaves together a tapestry of the sovereignty and grace of God in the life of his people and sets the stage for the climax of God’s rescue mission. The climax is the coming of Christ. In the incarnation, God himself takes on a human nature and enters the created order.”¹¹³ God demonstrates God’s commitment to creation and to God’s promises by coming in the flesh. Jesus is God incarnate.

Rick Hove and Heather Holleman write eloquently about the greatness of Jesus Christ: “So Jesus is inestimably great—so great that language strains to describe His supremacy—and He is a person, One whom we can know, trust, and adore. He is the agent of creation, and He invites us to cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). He is the end of everything that was created, and He knows every weakness, sympathizing with us in our crippling moments of need (Heb. 4:15).”¹¹⁴ Jesus is so great, and his loving presence so real, that a Christian professors’ work and life in the university ought to resonate with Jesus’ greatness.

Though Jesus comes as God in flesh, we must remember that this significant moment is also the climax of Israel’s story. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus proves to be the one true Israelite; where Israel has been unfaithful, Jesus is faithful. “This is how the story of Israel comes to its climax. The suffering of Israel’s representative has drawn the sting of the world’s evil...Now the

110. Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 54.

111. N. T. Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2016), 178.

112. Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 116.

113. Gould, *The Outrageous Idea*, 21.

114. Rick Hove and Heather Holleman, *A Grand Story: An Invitation to Christian Professors* (Orlando, FL: Cru Press, 2017), 27.

original vision for Israel can get back on track."¹¹⁵ This means that Jesus' triumph over sin and death on the cross not only makes eternal life possible for individual believers, but this upside-down victory of Jesus on the cross allows the new covenant people of God, the Church, to partner with God in God's rescue mission more faithfully.

Act 5: God's Missionary People Renewed

After Jesus' ascension to the right hand of God, Jesus' followers are filled with the Holy Spirit. In this new covenant, the Church is empowered for the task of being witnesses of Jesus' triumphal death and resurrection. It is within this fifth act of the drama that all Christians today find themselves; "if we are to understand our own mission today, we must take account of Israel's initial God-given task, of how Jesus fulfilled it, and of how the early church continued the work."¹¹⁶ The importance of the personal salvation made available through faith in Christ cannot be overstated. Yet, that salvation is not merely a spiritual salvation, but is also purposed toward the "restoration of God's rule over all of creation and all of human life."¹¹⁷ Therefore, the life of the Christian professor ought to help point people in the university context to the personal salvation that can be found only through faith in Christ, while also doing the work of a faculty member under the reign of King Jesus toward the restoration of all creation.

Act 6: Creation Restored

Jesus has promised that he will reappear. He will right all wrongs, and he will come to reign finally and fully over his creation. "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess 'Jesus is Lord' and the Garden of the new heavens and new earth will become the place of eternal bliss."¹¹⁸ How heartening it can be to the Christian professor to know that one's work can be done in concert with God's creation renewal project, with the promise that Jesus Christ will one day complete the work more fully and beautifully than can be imagined.

Conclusion

Every professor has unique gifts and strengths as God's image bearers. Every academic discipline has its purposes in God's beautiful and orderly creation, while also being marred by the fall. Every Christian professor finds themselves in a story in which Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has changed everything. Jesus Christ is everything. And Jesus' promise of reappearance means that the Christian professor has purpose and hope that their labor is not in vain.

115. Wright, *How God Became King*, 184.

116. Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 215.

117. Ibid., 216.

118. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?*, 36.

Session 5: Discussion Questions

1. How might this six-act telling of the story of God be a helpful orientation to you?
2. Was there an element to this telling of the Biblical story that seemed challenging to you or out of place?
3. What do you think of the idea that your academic discipline has a God-given basis considering God's creation and redemption, but is also influenced by false stories marred by evil?
4. If we are storied creatures and the experts in our discipline are living in a story, how might you articulate that story? What is the setting, the rising tension, the climax, and the resolution of the story that your academic discipline tells?

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

As we slowly and prayerfully read this Scripture text together, we will read it four times with four movements. First, we will ask: "what does the text say?" Second, we will ask: "what does the text say to me?" Third, we will ask: "how might you respond to God in prayer?" Lastly, we will ask: "what is God inviting you to?"

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me." (1 Cor 15:3-8 ESV)

The Heart (Session 6)

“Bobble Head” Faculty

Stereotypes of professors in our culture, however unfair, might have a semblance of truth to them. Certainly, most university professors are far less socially awkward, and more self-aware, than those portrayed in such films as *The Nutty Professor*.¹¹⁹ Yet, we would do well to consider if such satire might help to reveal slight tendencies. Perhaps philosopher James K.A. Smith is correct when he writes that Enlightenment thinking in the academy has influenced us to embrace “an overly cognitivist picture of the human person,” one that imagines that what it means to be human is to be a “bobble head.”¹²⁰ If Smith is correct, then the faculty member is our society’s “bobble head” par excellence. In any academic discipline, the educational hoops one must jump through to become a professor tend to overemphasize left-brain analysis at the expense of a holistic, Biblical anthropology that incorporates body, heart, and soul. Author Rob Murray, writing about corporate or business environments, describes a parallel culture to the university context:

From a corporate perspective, you may hear things like, “Check your emotions at the door when you come to work.” This paradigm highlights a dark reality: You’re entitled to your feelings; you just can’t have them here. Unless of course we’re talking about good feelings. Practically speaking, the suppression of feelings temporarily aids organizations that care solely about the bottom line.¹²¹

Emotional Intelligence

One might argue that university professors have more on their horizons than making a financial profit, but the university context is not necessarily any better at valuing the emotional and spiritual health of its professors. Sadly, the local Church today is likewise not any better at cultivating environments where people grow in emotional maturity.¹²² Many Christian professors’ primary faith expression is involvement in Sunday worship services that are overly-rationalistic, centered around abstract ideas and doctrines, all while “paradoxically allied with a certain kind of anti-intellectualism.”¹²³ There is another way. Regarding the nature of wisdom as seen in Proverbs, Tremper Longman argues that practical wisdom is much like emotional intelligence:

119 . *The Nutty Professor*, directed by Jerry Lewis (Paramount, 1963), <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057372/>.

120. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, vol.1, *Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 42.

121. Rob Murray, *Fighting for Heart: Four Ways to Invest in EQ so You Can Feel Stronger and Lead Better* (Nashville, TN: Telocity, 2023), 24.

122. Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 6.

123. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 42.

Emotional intelligence is different from what we often mean when we say that a person is intelligent. The latter concerns a knowledge of facts ("knowing that"), while wisdom entails living life skillfully ("knowing how"). Raw intelligence can be measured by devices such as an IQ test, while emotional intelligence can be measured by tests that indicate a person's EQ. Emotionally intelligent people, like the wise in the book of Proverbs, know how to say the right thing at the right time. They do the right thing at the right time. They also express emotions that are appropriate for a situation at the right intensity. Timing is everything in wisdom... Intriguingly, research has discovered that there is a high correlation between emotional intelligence and success in life, with a corresponding low connection between IQ and human flourishing.¹²⁴

The wise professor is as emotionally mature as they are sharp-minded. Yet, emotional intelligence does not just happen; it takes practice. The cultivation of emotional intelligence is likely a different kind of personal work than one experiences in the academy or even in most contemporary church contexts. Chip Dodd is a Christian psychologist that has decades of experience in helping people to grow in emotional intelligence. Reflecting on Proverbs¹²⁵ Dodd writes: "We are people with heart pains and heart problems which require heart solutions. However, we attempt to solve heart problems with intellect, willpower, and morality, which are no more effective for solving heart problems than a shovel is for cutting a board. Both the shovel and the board are good, but the combination is ineffective."¹²⁶ The remainder of this session will unpack Dodd's eight-feeling paradigm, culminating in a feelings exercise as a group.

The Eight Feelings

The eight feelings are hurt, lonely, sad, anger, fear, shame, guilt, and glad.¹²⁷ Like a paint-color palette, human beings do experience a wide array of emotions. Some leaders in the field of emotional intelligence, such as Rob Murray, prefer to work with a twelve-feelings paradigm.¹²⁸ However, Dodd's eight-feeling paradigm is not meant to invalidate all feelings outside of these eight. He believes that these eight core feelings exist, perhaps like the primary colors on a color wheel. All other feelings would be slightly varying shades of these eight, and it is most helpful to drill down to these core eight feelings.

Having clarity about what one is feeling, along with the reasons for such feelings, is an essential component of emotional intelligence. As simple as it may seem to intellectually understand and to become self-aware of the eight feelings, this work is an uphill battle. Most people have intuitively

124. Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 7-8.

125. "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man." (Prov. 27:19 English Standard Version.)

126. Chip Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart: A Call to Full Living*, 2nd ed. (Franklin, TN: Sage Hill Resources, 2014), 31.

127. Ibid., 37.

128. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 115.

learned that it is morally wrong or practically unhelpful to experience certain feelings.¹²⁹ Therefore, many have unknowingly practiced habits that numb or block their feelings, however unsuccessfully, unaware that all eight of these feelings can have an appropriate place in human flourishing amid a fallen world. What follows are summarizing descriptions of each of the eight feelings.

HURT

Hurt is not only a physical feeling, but also an emotional and spiritual experience. This kind of feeling happens because humans are relational beings, and in a fallen world each one of us is bound to be relationally wounded. Hurt is the experience of existential pain in our hearts.¹³⁰ The admission of feeling hurt can require courage. Admitting to ourselves, to others, and to God that we are feeling emotional pain can feel risky; hurt is evidence that our hearts are vulnerable, particularly to the words and behavior of others. Accepting the feeling of hurt can be like “exposing a chink in your armor that others might exploit.”¹³¹ How many faculty have experienced the feeling of being hurt particularly in the context of their training or in their campus work environment? It would be common at some point in time for professors to have felt overlooked, rejected, or betrayed by mentors or colleagues; perhaps those end-of-semester reviews submitted by students have been more hurtful than constructive.

Many of us would rather ignore or suppress the feeling of being hurt. However, there are consequences; Dodd writes that when we do not allow ourselves to feel hurt, this will lead to resentment towards those we perceive have hurt us or anyone we might associate with them.¹³² Ironically, though it is relationships that harm us, it is relationships with others and with God that bring healing to our hurt. Resentment blocks our healing because it causes relational distance. Accepting the feeling of hurt and learning to express that feeling to others, perhaps even to the individual we feel has harmed us, should the situation warrant it, can be significant heart medicine.

LONELY

Timothy and Kathy Keller write: “to be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God.”¹³³ Because we are relational beings, each of us desires to be both known and loved, to experience connection and intimacy in relationships. The feeling of loneliness comes when these God-given desires seemingly go unmet. Loneliness is difficult for many of us to accept and to allow ourselves to feel, because loneliness exposes our innate relational needs in a culture

129. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 40.

130. Ibid., 44.

131. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 100.

132. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 49.

133. Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2016), 95.

that glorifies self-sufficiency.¹³⁴ If most college students (who typically have more time and access to relationships than others in society) are feeling extremely lonely,¹³⁵ then is it not likely that professors can feel likewise? In an academic culture that glorifies originality and individual achievement, the feeling of loneliness is more common than faculty might like to admit.

Our attempt to avoid feeling loneliness can lead to relational “withdrawal and isolation.”¹³⁶ Dodd believes it is one’s resistance to feeling lonely that most commonly lies underneath one’s experience of apathy.¹³⁷ This posture toward life only reinforces feelings of loneliness, of course. However, allowing ourselves to experience the feeling of loneliness can lead us to act by moving towards deeper connection with others. The wise professor allows their loneliness to move them toward closer relationships with God and others.

SAD

Sadness is a feeling that each of us experiences when something or someone significant to us has been lost.¹³⁸ Sadness is a common and very appropriate feeling when living in a broken world. Yet, no one wants to feel the pain of sadness, so we tend to resist the emotion. Sadness reveals the limits of what we can control; to be human is to experience loss. Just a glimpse of a professor’s experience of loss is when their journal articles are rejected, they are denied a grant they worked hard to attain, or they miss out on tenured-track positions. Murray writes that we tend to fear, “if I let myself feel sad about this, what if I never come back? What if it overtakes me?”¹³⁹ Yet sadness cannot be swept under the rug successfully.

Acceptance is the posture of allowing oneself to acknowledge their lack of control and to feel the sadness that accompanies one’s loss. One of the means to a state of acceptance is the Christian practice of lament, the intentional expression of the emotion of one’s sadness toward God.¹⁴⁰ There are often losses in our lives that cannot be fixed or redeemed this side of eternity. Yet, acceptance of sadness can help us to appreciate more deeply what we value most and can eventually lead to more meaningful living.¹⁴¹

134. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 61.

135. Rob Danzman, “Why Are College Students Feeling So Lonely?,” *Psychology Today*, February 26, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/campus-crunch/202002/why-are-college-students-feeling-so-lonely>.

136. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 181.

137. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 65.

138. *Ibid.*, 69.

139. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 170.

140. Mt. 5:4 (English Standard Version).

141. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 174.

ANGER

Anger is a feeling that arises when we experience that life is not going how we think it should go. Murray writes that when something is not working, “anger is the feeling that usually surfaces the loudest.”¹⁴² One can argue that anger is one of the most misunderstood of the emotions, while being one of the most resisted. Dodd writes that the feeling of anger reveals two things. First, anger reveals what we are passionate about. Second, it reveals that there are other additional feelings present that need to be tended to (sadness, fear, etc.).¹⁴³

The most prevalent feeling in our society’s culture war is anger.¹⁴⁴ The feeling of anger as grievance against our perceived enemy is pervasive in our contemporary culture, and the university campus is no exception. Dodd believes that it is possible to misuse the energy of anger to protect ourselves from pain, by displacing all that is wrong externally with other people or circumstances. This misuse of anger leads to pride.¹⁴⁵ But when anger is properly channeled it can motivate Christian faculty toward passionate action for good.

FEAR

Fear is a future-oriented emotion. Fear is not only a biological response to perceived physical danger, but also a heart response to the anticipation of feeling hurt and sad.¹⁴⁶ Our culture has taught us to do whatever is necessary to prevent or avoid whatever might elicit fear. We might have learned that admitting our fear is displaying our weakness.¹⁴⁷ The culture of the academy would tend to tempt faculty to hide or squash their fears, as a faculty member’s personal weakness would be intuitively seen as a negative.

However, when we acknowledge our fears and accept the feeling of fear, it can lead to a certain kind of practical wisdom. “Discernment that comes by listening to our fear helps us to choose the wisest course of action...fear offers us the chance to decide or discern which direction to go.”¹⁴⁸ It is common for the strength of our fear to be incongruent with the severity of potential loss or pain that we anticipate. And for the Christian, there is no loss or harm that will not be made right in the end.¹⁴⁹ The recognition of this reality helps the wise professor to cultivate courage amid feeling

142. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 87.

143. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 80.

144. Fred Bauer, “On Culture War and the Moral Limits of Anger,” *National Review*, September 24, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/on-culture-war-and-the-moral-limits-of-anger/>.

145. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 85.

146. *Ibid.*, 92.

147. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 119.

148. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 93.

149. Rev. 21:4 (English Standard Version).

fear. Though counter-intuitive, the pathway toward becoming a “non-anxious presence” is not the avoidance of fear, but the recognition and acceptance of fear.

SHAME

The academy is a context with a strong honor and shame dynamic. Honor and prestige tend to be highly valued, achieved by external identity markers. How many faculty are driven to pursue honor through garnishing their *curriculum vitae*? Yet, in any culture that emphasizes honor and prestige, there will also be the feeling of shame. Shame in its healthiest form is the recognition that we are limited beings who have legitimate needs and desires we cannot satisfy alone. “Shame is the emotional and spiritual recognition of the potential to fail and to do harm, to succeed, and to love.”¹⁵⁰

The feeling of shame is often discussed these days, and it gets some bad press.¹⁵¹ Sadly, in a fallen world most of us tend to equate the feeling of shame with its toxic form. Toxic shame is accompanied by the belief that there is something permanently flawed about us that defines our value and worth; it is the “rejection of the image of God we all carry in our hearts.”¹⁵² The wise professor acknowledges the feeling of shame, teasing apart any toxic elements without rejecting the feeling all together. After all, some expert psychologists define narcissism as the inability to feel shame.¹⁵³

GUILT

The feeling of guilt, though often associated with shame, is a distinct feeling. Guilt is the feeling that comes with the sense that one has “done something wrong.”¹⁵⁴ Guilt can also accompany the sense that one has omitted doing what ought to be done.¹⁵⁵ Guilt is an appropriate feeling for flawed human beings. Yet one of the complicated aspects of the feeling of guilt is that it is possible to feel false guilt in situations where one has not, in fact, done something wrong. When we recognize the feeling of guilt, it allows the opportunity to evaluate whether we have transgressed; feeling guilt affords us the opportunity to seek forgiveness and to make amends when appropriate.

It is entirely possible that faculty would rarely hear anyone among colleagues in their department admit to wrongdoing. Likewise, the practice of forgiveness is not well-understood and some

150. Dodd, *Voice of the Heart*, 111.

151. Brene Brown, “Listening to Shame,” TED2012 (TED, 2012), https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.

152. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 118.

153. Michel Hendricks and Jim Wilder, *The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2020), 159.

154. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 123.

155. Murray, *Fighting for Heart*, 146.

consider forgiveness to be “fading” in our society.¹⁵⁶ The avoidance of guilt can lead to a posture of deflecting blame toward others. But guilt can be a gift, as the feeling is an important ingredient in being a humble person.¹⁵⁷ The wise professor is one who accepts the feeling of guilt, taking comfort in the cross of Christ as God’s transformative solution to all their wrong-doing.¹⁵⁸

GLAD

The feeling of gladness cannot be simply equated with happiness. Dodd argues that happiness is dependent upon our circumstances. Gladness is a more profound feeling. “Gladness is about desiring deeply and having a willingness to walk through pain in the pursuit of desire.”¹⁵⁹ For Dodd, the feeling of gladness involves accepting that life in a broken world requires one to embrace feeling pain and loss; this is what makes a deeper joy possible.¹⁶⁰ Yet, when one is unwilling to accept the hurt of feelings like loneliness and sadness, then one will tend to turn to “sensuous pleasure.”¹⁶¹ These pleasures lead to a counterfeit and fleeting feeling of happiness, and often involve a compromise of one’s character. From the Christian perspective, profound gladness is an experience for those who have surrendered their hearts to someone greater than themselves.¹⁶²

156. John Inazu, “Tim Keller on Forgiveness,” *Some Assembly Required Blog*, November 18, 2022, <https://johninazu.substack.com/p/tim-keller-on-forgiveness>.

157. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 125.

158. 1 Pet. 2:24 (English Standard Version).

159. Dodd, *The Voice of the Heart*, 136.

160. *Ibid.*, 139.

161. *Ibid.*, 143.

162. *Ibid.*, 147.

Session 6: Discussion Questions

1. How does the image of the professor as a “bobble head” strike you?
2. How have you seen or experienced either emotional maturity or immaturity in your work context?
3. Do you find yourself open or resistant toward greater emotional intelligence? How so?

Spiritual Practice: Emotional “Check-in” with God

One does not simply arrive at a place of emotional maturity. It is a life-long journey. Like all spiritual practices, this practice should be repeated over time. Take a moment to slow down, to pause. Take a few deep breaths. You may consciously acknowledge that you are created in God’s image, and that as a Christian the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. While imagining you are in the presence of God, you are graciously asked about what is going on in your heart. Make note of any of the eight feelings with which you may resonate.

HURT, LONELY, SAD, ANGER, FEAR, SHAME, GUILT, GLAD

After each person is given a chance to share any of the feelings they are experiencing, time may be set aside to verbally process what is behind such feelings. Emotional intelligence will involve both self-awareness and non-judgmental listening. Close the session with what has been called The Serenity Prayer:

*“God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed; courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.” Amen.*¹⁶³

163. Reinhold Niebuhr and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Theologian of Public Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 15.

Wise Professors as a Counterpublic (Session 7)

Intolerance of Faith

Pastor and writer Tish Harrison Warren tells the story of her days working in campus ministry with graduate students and faculty at Vanderbilt University.¹⁶⁴ In the spring of 2011, the administration of the university approached her campus ministry to say that the group's status at the university was in jeopardy. As had long been the case, leaders in her campus ministry were expected to affirm their organization's Christian doctrinal statements, even as the group welcomed (as participants) anyone who held differing beliefs. The administration at Vanderbilt was suspicious, arguing that any requirements to affirm particular religious beliefs would lead to discrimination of sexual minorities.

Warren writes that this season of her life was tiring, disorienting, and full of grief. Tense hours were spent behind closed doors in conversation with administrators. Many more hours were spent working behind the scenes internally within the organization on the best ways to navigate the situation, to find the right words at the right times. The pressure was only heightened by the reality that national news outlets had caught wind of what was happening at Vanderbilt, and it was only a matter of time before this tenuous situation was being dragged into a broader culture war. Warren goes on to say that the pressure of this season forced her to grow in her nurture and care for words. Though some state governments, such as in Ohio, continue to pass legislation advancing religious liberties at public universities,¹⁶⁵ Christian professors are still bound to feel the pressure that comes from embracing a belief system often assumed to be intolerant in the university context.

What does a wise professor do amid such challenges? How do Christian professors live a life on mission, seeking to have a Christian influence within the university setting, when feeling resistance or facing opposition? Professors Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer have written an important work for our time entitled *Winsome Persuasion*.¹⁶⁶ In it, Muehlhoff and Langer offer paradigms and practical insights that could help Christian professors navigate a sometimes-hostile climate with wisdom.

164. Tish Harrison Warren, "The Writer," in *Uncommon Ground: Living Faithfully in a World of Difference*, ed. Timothy Keller and John D. Inazu (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2020), 73-75.

165. Cierra Johnson, "New Ohio Law Requires Colleges Accommodate Religious Observances," January 5, 2023, <https://www.wdtn.com/news/ohio/new-ohio-law-requires-colleges-accommodate-religious-observances/>.

166. Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer, *Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

Publics and Counterpublics

Though a public does not always have clearly formalized and defined boundaries, a public is any group of people with a shared sense of identity, priorities, and values.¹⁶⁷ A college or university, and the people involved in it, constitute a good example of a public. A public tends to have a shared symbolic map; they tend to emphasize certain words and ascribe a shared sense of meaning to those words. At a campus such as The Ohio State University, the administration (a strong public) has presented that the following words are to symbolize Ohio State's values: excellence, impact, diversity, innovation, inclusion, equity, care, compassion, integrity, and respect.¹⁶⁸ A public ascribes certain meaning to such words, contributing to the university's symbolic map.

A counterpublic is a group of people, also with a shared sense of identity and priorities, that sees itself as a marginalized minority within a larger public.¹⁶⁹ A counterpublic may have its own distinct symbolic map, or they may share a similar symbolic map but ascribe different meanings to that map.¹⁷⁰ For example, one can envision how Christian faculty might be able to embrace many or all of the words that make up Ohio State's stated values, while ascribing a different meaning or nuance to many of those words. One's worldview, their "overall orientation in life,"¹⁷¹ will inform the symbolic meaning of such values. If Christians are to be "salt" and "light"¹⁷² in the university setting, if they are to be an effective counterpublic, they must "speak in a way that the public understands and finds credible. In short, the counterpublic must speak the vernacular of the public."¹⁷³ Reflecting on her story at Vanderbilt, Warren writes: "all of us have to land somewhere – we all bet our lives on some version of reality, of truth and morality. The goal... must be to state our convictions clearly and (not but!) humbly."¹⁷⁴

Embracing the Tension

Muehlhoff and Langer remark that counterpublics, at least those that seek to engage the public rather than withdraw, will face some tension. On the one hand, counterpublics need to speak in a way that they are understood by the public; on the other, they need to avoid adopting the public's

167. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 14-15.

168. The Ohio State University, "Vision, Mission and Values," 2022, <https://www.osu.edu/shared-values>.

169. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 18.

170. *Ibid.*, 16.

171. Dallas Willard, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009), 44.

172. Mt. 5:13-14 (English Standard Version).

173. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 20.

174. Warren, "The Writer," in *Uncommon Ground*, 82.

language in a way that compromises their own sense of identity and values.¹⁷⁵ This is the tension between relevance and capitulation.

Timothy Keller, a retired pastor who served in New York City, has described “crosswinds” that Christians are bound to face as religious minorities in a secular environment. One of these two crosswinds “pressed believers to assimilate and adapt too much to the individualism and relativism of the city.”¹⁷⁶ Assimilation would lead to the compromise and loss of a distinct Christian identity and values. However, the other crosswind “led believers to find ways of living almost within a Christian bubble.” The temptation to withdraw and to lose contact with the public is evergreen. Keller admits that he believes withstanding these crosswinds is more difficult now than when he first began pastoring in New York, as Christians are now “often seen as a sinister force.”¹⁷⁷

The Scope of the Counterpublic

Muehlhoff and Langer argue that though it is not wrong for Christian counterpublics to seek to have influence on a national or even global scale, that seeking to engage too large a public can be ineffective at best. A Christian counterpublic ought to focus their attention on their local spheres of influence, on the real people with whom they have various kinds of shared life experiences.¹⁷⁸ Wise Christian professors ought not get so caught up in influencing their wider academic field that they ignore the students, graduate students, colleagues, and staff in their local context. Those working in campus ministry at one’s university ought to be some of the best allies in such an endeavor! Muehlhoff and Langer argue that even though local churches are God’s primary counterpublics, parachurch ministries can also be uniquely effective counterpublics depending upon the context.¹⁷⁹ I would argue that public universities can be such a context.

Credibility

The goal of a counterpublic is to share a message that is believable, communicating in a way that can remove obstacles to belief.¹⁸⁰ The counterpublic seeks to persuade others to see the world and to narrate reality as they do.¹⁸¹ In order to be an effective communicator, the audience must find the speaker to be a credible authority. With reference to Aristotle’s writing on rhetoric, Muehlhoff and Langer bring attention to three ingredients to credibility: wisdom, virtue, and goodwill.

175. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 21.

176. Timothy Keller, “The Pastor,” in *Uncommon Ground: Living Faithfully in a World of Difference*, ed. Timothy Keller and John D. Inazu (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2020), 27.

177. *Ibid.*, 29.

178. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 25.

179. *Ibid.*, 42.

180. *Ibid.*, 68.

181. *Ibid.*, 91.

Wisdom, in regard to rhetorical credibility, is about having a well-rounded understanding of the issue at hand. In other words, one loses credibility when the audience perceives that a communicator is biased toward their view because they are ignorant of the weaknesses of their own view, or ignorant of the potential strengths of an alternative view. In this case, wisdom increases credibility because the speaker displays a working understanding of alternative sides of the issue yet can still reasonably demonstrate that their view makes the best sense of the facts.¹⁸² Muehlhoff and Langer show that a lack of this rhetorical wisdom among Christian leaders has contributed to the Church's loss of many in today's younger generations. "If we only arm individuals with affirmation that the biblical position is true without presenting them with clear counterarguments, we not only set them up for failure when they encounter articulate opposition, but we run the risk of losing their trust."¹⁸³

A Christian counterpublic's second ingredient of credibility is virtue. Though Muehlhoff and Langer note that a public's understanding of what is virtuous is shaped by their worldview, there are certain virtues that seem to be almost universally honored. The authors argue that one of the most important virtues for strengthening credibility is humility. An intellectually humble communicator is one that appreciates the limitations of their own understanding, with an openness to listening to and learning from others.¹⁸⁴ "Accepting a humble approach to our Christian convictions means that we embrace the reality that all of us have blind spots, lack of information, and biases that keep us from seeing and knowing things clearly."¹⁸⁵ A Christian counterpublic is more persuasive when they do not present themselves as being superhuman.

A third ingredient of credibility is goodwill. A speaker is more persuasive when the audience intuitively believes that the communicator genuinely has their best interest in mind. Credibility is strengthened when the audience's experience is that the communicator believes the audience to be worthy of dignity and respect. The opposite of such a posture is one that belittles the audience and treats them with "contempt, spite, and insult."¹⁸⁶ Tish Harrison Warren warns that Christians can be so influenced by the vitriolic manner of communication seen in today's culture wars that we can be too focused on simply being right. "Christians can use words in ways that are accurate but obnoxious or true but trite. But if we do so, we do not simply fail to be kind; we also fail to herald the kingdom of God."¹⁸⁷ Credibility is strengthened when a Christian counterpublic lives their lives in a manner that is congruent with their message centered on a loving and humble Savior.¹⁸⁸

182. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 69.

183. *Ibid.*, 71.

184. *Ibid.*, 73.

185. *Ibid.*, 74.

186. *Ibid.*, 75.

187. Warren, "The Writer," in *Uncommon Ground*, 80.

188. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 76.

Crafting the Message

Muehlhoff and Langer offer some practical advice when it comes to crafting a message. First, they argue for the importance of clearly recognizing a problem to be addressed.¹⁸⁹ This requires awareness of what is happening in one's locality that should be different than it is. The wise Christian professor might be motivated to address what is contributing to students' alienation from a relationship with God through Christ, or issues of suffering or injustice in their community, among other problems.

Second, it is important to clarify the identity of the audience. This involves seeing oneself as an original audience of the message, seeking to capture what is most compelling to oneself while doing due diligence in regard to understanding opposing views.¹⁹⁰ A counterpublic does well to remember that those whom they are trying to persuade hold different perspectives for reasons that make sense to them. A failure to appreciate these perspectives, and what lies behind them, will likely lead to a failure to persuade. Testing one's ideas can be a critical aspect of understanding one's audience. A communicator might think that they have constructed a persuasive message for a particular audience, only to discover a dynamic the speaker was previously unable to perceive.¹⁹¹ Testing one's ideas with even one person from the intended audience can bring needed insight to adapt one's message. The wise Christian professor is likely to discover that many of today's university students see the world differently than even relatively young faculty. "The goal is to craft a message that reflects values you share with the people you wish to engage."¹⁹²

Third, one might consider the use of images. Depending upon the medium, the message might be enhanced or become more persuasive in cooperation with images. The authors note how effective, for good or for ill, social media apps such as Instagram can be in communicating a message.¹⁹³ What generation has less capacity for words, and is more accustomed to being persuaded through images, than today's university students?

Fourth, a counterpublic should work hard to establish a firm starting point for the message. A starting point is likely not the central theme of the message, but a beginning point that demonstrates an appreciation of the world of the audience and what might matter to them. University students today are likely to assume that professors are oblivious to their perception of the world; if students are the professor's audience this is likely an obstacle to overcome. "As you craft your message, the goal of a starting point is to allow you to eventually address the ultimate

189. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 92.

190. *Ibid.*, 93.

191. *Ibid.*, 95.

192. *Ibid.*, 97.

193. *Ibid.*, 98.

nature of things, where your explicit faith commitments will no doubt come into the conversation – at the right time.”¹⁹⁴

Fifth, the counterpublic’s success at persuasion requires an understanding of the audience’s “plausibility structures.”¹⁹⁵ Because human beings are social creatures, what is plausible is not just what seems rational to the individual alone in a vacuum. Rather, plausible beliefs are those that can be supported and reinforced by an “alternative community.”¹⁹⁶ “As Christian counterpublics we must present those we seek to persuade with an inclusive plausibility structure that represents the breadth of opinions and possibilities within our community, not merely our personal convictions.”¹⁹⁷

Finally, the counterpublic must respect the “sacred core” of those they are seeking to persuade. The sacred core is the audience’s most valued beliefs or sense of identity. If one’s message will address the audience’s sacred core, the communicator must be willing to tread lightly, perhaps even expressing sympathy for how the message could be received in hurtful ways by the audience.¹⁹⁸

Conclusion

Wise Christian professors can make up a counterpublic that engages the campus with an effective Christian witness in accord with the mission of God. Doing so will require much of the hard work described above. Yet, if it is not Christian faculty in the secular academy that can model winsome persuasion to the Church for the sake of the world, who will do so?

194. Muehlhoff and Langer, *Winsome Persuasion*, 100-101.

195. *Ibid.*, 102.

196. *Ibid.*, 103.

197. *Ibid.*, 104.

198. *Ibid.*, 106.

Session 7: Discussion Questions

1. Have you experienced opposition or hostility in the university setting because of your faith? Have you sensed you would experience more opposition if you were more vocal about your beliefs? How does that make you feel?
2. Are you more tempted toward withdrawal or assimilation? How so?
3. Is there anything that seems especially important to you in regard to crafting a message?
4. If there is one personal takeaway from this session, what might that be?

Spiritual Practice: Emotional “Check-in” with God

Take a moment to slow down, to pause. Take a few deep breaths. You may consciously acknowledge that you are created in God’s image, and that as a Christian the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. While imagining you are in the presence of God, you are graciously asked about what is going on in your heart. Make note of any of the eight feelings with which you may resonate.

HURT, LONELY, SAD, ANGER, FEAR, SHAME, GUILT, GLAD

Time may be set aside to verbally process what is behind such feelings. Close the session with what has been called The Serenity Prayer:

*“God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed; courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.” Amen.*¹⁹⁹

199. Reinhold Niebuhr and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Theologian of Public Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 15.

Assessment

Preceding the creation of this project, and based on research and stakeholder feedback, four critical success indicators were created for the assessment of this project. The following outlines these predetermined success indicators, followed by an assessment of the project in light of the substantial sample provided above, in accordance with these indicators.

- The curriculum must be clearly written with sound citations, and it must help to address the NPO. The intended audience demands a curriculum with sound grammar and with a strong dependence upon expert sources. Each session of the program must have at least three citations.

However paradoxical it is for me to say because most writers consider their work to be well-written, I do believe this project has clear and strong arguments and is well-supported with sound citations. The project fits the primary intended audience of Christian faculty. The issue of the project helping to address the NPO is a little more complex, because the NPO is neither small nor simple. The problem of Christian faculty being disconnected and ill-equipped for a missional impact in the secular university setting will not be solved by a quick fix. In fact, one can argue that our culture's pull toward the value of pragmatism has contributed to the nature of the problem. Some might read this project and desire to take away more practical action steps. Yet, a project primarily focused on actionable steps would fail to challenge false assumptions while insufficiently addressing the nature of the problem.

Others may consider this project overly intellectual. Yet, if there is ever a target audience that requires a project involving some deep thinking, it is faculty in the secular academy. The project that has been provided is only the beginning, and what is needed for further development (as described in the project launch plan) are elements that would continue to cultivate experience and tracks for practical action.

I do believe this project can begin to facilitate inter-personal connection among colleagues that would otherwise experience relational isolation. I also believe the project gives professors an orienting framework needed to become better equipped for their missional vocation.

- The content and guide for discussion and spiritual practices must be practical for short gatherings. Regular gatherings must not last longer than ninety minutes due to the faculty's time constraints, and so the combination of curriculum, group discussion, and spiritual practice must fit within this ninety-minute timeframe.

Each session includes an essay that is typically between 2000 and 2500 words. Reading aloud at even a slower pace of 100 words-per-minute, it should take no longer than twenty-five minutes to read the essay portion of each session. This allows for an additional twenty to thirty minutes to discuss the essay using the provided discussion questions, while allowing an additional thirty minutes to facilitate the closing group spiritual practice. The project should set the table for regular gatherings that last no longer than ninety minutes.

- There must be flexibility in the format of the program. Inevitably a faculty member will miss attendance at a gathering so there must be a suggested pathway for individual engagement with the content.

On the one hand, the project is written in such a way that it is still intelligible for the individual faculty member to read the essay from a session they missed, on their own time. It should be possible for a faculty member to reflect and even write out their personal responses to the discussion questions that have been provided. Assuming the faculty member has attended and participated in previous sessions, they should also be able to utilize the spiritual practices on their own.

On the other hand, for a project such as this, so much of its value is that it assumes Christian faculty from various academic departments are physically present together. The group discussion component is a key ingredient in the program, not only because this is necessary to overcome the pervasive social isolation of Christian faculty, but because group discussion should sharpen people's thinking around the themes from the essay. One can argue that participating in a group spiritual practice offers a unique dynamic in one's spiritual formation that is difficult to replicate for an individual alone.

Likewise, some stakeholders have expressed some doubt that faculty members will take time on their own to read the essay from a missed session, let alone to reflect on the essay or to utilize the spiritual practice offered. If a Christian professor were to miss both the information and the experience of one of the sessions, this would not necessarily cause the formative experience to completely falter, but every session missed would likely diminish the benefits of participating in the program. The issue of busy and over-worked faculty is not an easy issue to resolve.

- The program must engage the whole person. There must be a way to demonstrate that the program is able to cultivate growth in the audience loving God and neighbor with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30).

One of the program's strengths is that it offers more than simply providing information. This is more than another book. Since human beings are relational by nature, the group dynamic is a key feature of cultivating whole-person growth. This group dynamic should counteract the faculty member's tendency to think and to work in social isolation. Also, the group spiritual practice portion of each session adds an element that is likely a new and perhaps a challenging experience for many Christian faculty that are accustomed to thinking and talking, but not accustomed to slowing down, inner-examination, or contemplative prayer. This program could cultivate in Christian faculty a love for God and a motivation to participate in the mission of God not previously experienced.

As is, a weakness of this project is that it does not push faculty into actionable ministry experiences. Growth in missional skills, like tangibly loving one's neighbor, often does involve the experience of doing something that stretches one's comfort zones. The project launch plan will explore how these kinds of experiences could ultimately be incorporated into this program.

Project Launch Plan

Doctoral Project Description

My NPO statement is as follows: Considering Christian faculty, we have discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

The Doctoral Project is a curriculum designed to be utilized in context of regular, small group of three to twelve Christian faculty in a secular academic setting like The Ohio State University. The curriculum has as its central theme the cultivation of wisdom. The project argues that Biblical wisdom offers a holistic framework for a Christian professor's growth in Christ-likeness, with greater ability to embody their missional vocation. Each session imagines a group reading of an essay, supplies several discussion questions for group facilitation, and culminates in a group spiritual practice.

Audience

The primary audience for my doctoral project is Christian faculty in the secular university setting. The project is designed to be inclusive for professors and scholars from any academic discipline in the university context. A secondary audience could be graduate students, particularly those that anticipate a career path within secular academic settings. Another secondary audience could be campus ministers that have a long view in regard to developing a more robust Christian witness on campus; such campus ministers could benefit from imagining how wise Christian faculty could compliment their missional goals.

I already have relationships with approximately twenty Christian faculty working withing various academic departments at The Ohio State University. To one degree or another, these professors are aware that I have been developing this project, and some have been patiently awaiting the implementation of this project. Some have been stakeholders and have offered significant feedback along the way. I will reach out to these professors, cast vision for participating in the project, and lay out a plan to begin regular faculty gatherings to explore this curriculum together.

Development Plan

Thus far, the content for the initial seven sessions has been completed and submitted for this doctoral project. This is sufficient content to organize a bi-weekly gathering for Christian faculty for one semester. The project will be launched at the beginning of September of 2023. My intent is to research and to create five more sessions, yielding at least twelve sessions total; this would provide a framework to continue the program on a bi-weekly basis through most of the spring semester and the completion of the main academic year.

In order to further cultivate missional wisdom among Christian faculty, I will create subsequent sessions that will discuss the following themes: a theology of work, the Trinity and the Christian life, discernment in our cultural moment, Christian apologetics, and practical ministry skills. I anticipate researching and writing two of these sessions over the spring and summer months of 2023, ready

to be added to the project by September 1st, 2023. As the fall semester unwinds at The Ohio State University, I anticipate researching and writing three more sessions. This writing will happen during the same fall semester timeframe, while I also facilitate a bi-weekly gathering utilizing the first seven sessions of this project. This means that five additional bi-weekly sessions for Christian faculty will be ready to be organized for spring semester, beginning in January of 2024.

Each of these five additional sessions will have a similar length and format to the seven completed sessions provided in this project. Connections will be made in these additional sessions with the overarching theme of wisdom; the sessions will seek to facilitate relational connection between colleagues, while preparing these faculty for a tangible missional impact on their campus. All of the success indicators provided in the assessment portion of the submitted project will inform the creation of these five additional sessions.

Development Process

The goal of this program will not have reached its fulfillment if Christian faculty are not practically equipped to integrate their faith with their work in ways that lead to a more robust Christian witness on campus, particularly among students. At the outset of my project launch next September, I plan to ask the participating faculty to do a short exercise. I will ask them to make a case (in a 5-7 sentence paragraph) for how it is that Jesus Christ is relevant to their academic field and their work at the university, with an intended audience of young Christian or spiritually-seeking college freshmen. I will collect and retain what they have written, and plan to (anonymously) share the professors' responses to new college freshman, asking if what is written is both coherent and compelling. I will plan, at a later time, to share the student feedback with the participating Christian faculty.

At the conclusion of the project in spring semester 2024, I will ask these same faculty to participate in the same exercise. I will likewise plan to share the original answers alongside these new paragraphs to college freshmen, seeking their feedback regarding potential improvements in the professors' explanations. This evaluation process will be far from an exhaustive measure, but it ought to provide valuable data about the effectiveness of this project.

I will also separately plan to ask the Christian faculty participants to offer feedback about the program, particularly regarding whether their experience would indicate this project truly addresses the NPO. I will want to know if the faculty perceive they are better connected relationally and well-equipped for mission impact. I will plan to ask about what was most helpful. I will ask what they perceive are weaknesses or areas of improvement for the project. Based upon this feedback, I will plan to adapt or add to the program elements that might make it more effective for other Christian faculty in the future.

Appendix A– Milestone 1 The NPO Charter

Personal Research Manifesto

I will assume that as valuable as my own experiences might be, they are limited and biased. As such I will look to gather more data that I do not currently have, I will seek the perspectives of others, and I will adjust my conclusions accordingly.

NPO Statement

Considering Christian faculty, we discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

NPO Scope and Constraints

At the completion of this Doctor of Ministry degree, a pilot program will exist to help equip Christian faculty at The Ohio State University to integrate their faith with their position on campus and to live on mission. At this point in the development process, it is difficult to estimate the exact scope and cost associated with the final product. Extent, boundaries, and costs will be evaluated and incorporated as the process progresses.

NPO Context

The NPO Context focuses on Christian faculty at Ohio State. These faculty will be at least loosely affiliated with a program of Cru at Ohio State called The Thompson Institute. We intend to involve a strong diversity of faculty from various generational, ethnic, and academic backgrounds. Ideally, this work will involve ten to thirty faculty, and will function in concert with the mission of Cru at Ohio State.

Root Causes

Internal to the Church, Christian faculty have not been mentored and equipped to integrate their faith with their work in the academy, nor to grasp how their roles as professors at the university fit into God's mission on campus. External to the Church, the culture of the academy tends to marginalize the relevance of the Christian faith. The professor has been formed to believe that what matters in their work is academic success and rising in academic rank. Public witness as a Christian might actually inhibit Christian faculty from achieving these ends. Undergirding these internal and external root causes are the philosophical effects of the Enlightenment, having separated the secular realm from the sacred realm in Western culture, for the Christian and non-Christian alike.

Discovery Workshop Stakeholders

Female Christian professor of geography at The Ohio State University

Female Christian professor of medicine at Ohio State

Male Christian PhD student in chemical engineering at Ohio State

Male senior leader with Cru at Ohio State, and PhD in biblical studies

One-On-One Interviews

Male Christian undergraduate student leader with Cru at Ohio State

Male non-Christian undergraduate student at Ohio State

Male former Cru staff, and current professor of philosophy

3-5 Key Biblical Texts

"...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
Acts 1:8b (ESV)

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." - Genesis 2:15 (ESV)

"And Levi made him a great feast in his house." Luke 5:29a (ESV)

Academic Resources

I intend to consult the work of historians on the relationship of the Church and the academy such as George Marsden and Mark Noll. Towards a theology of work and vocation, I intend to consult the work of Timothy Keller and Hans Boersma. Towards a theology of mission I hope to consult Christopher JH Wright. Towards a greater understanding philosophically of this secular and sacred divide I intend to consult philosophers such as Dallas Willard, James K.A. Smith, and Paul Gould. Towards an understanding of Christian intellectual witness and hospitality I intend to consult Francis and Edith Schaeffer, also engaging the work of Christine D. Pohl.

Discovery Workshop Description

The discovery workshop itself involved four key stakeholders. One stakeholder is a female senior lecturer in the Department of Geography at The Ohio State University. Another is a female and recently retired associate professor in the OSU College of Medicine while having also obtained a D.Min. degree. Another stakeholder is a male senior campus ministry leader with Cru at Ohio State, having also obtained a Ph.D. in Biblical studies. The final stakeholder is a male and a second year Ph.D. student in chemical engineering and a leader with Cru for graduate students at Ohio State.

Due to the limited availability of time of the stakeholders, we divided the workshop into two separate virtual meetings, and all four stakeholders were able to participate in both sessions. In the first workshop session an initial NPO was presented. We discussed the issues this NPO seems to be

addressing and we discussed the audiences that are impacted by the NPO while discussing why addressing the NPO might be worth the investment. In the second virtual meeting we discussed the differences it might make for various audiences if the NPO were addressed, the reasons why this NPO might exist, and lastly, we sought to summarize our findings while contemplating areas for further research.

After the completion of the workshop, three people participated in one-on-one interviews to discuss the findings of the workshop. One person interviewed is a philosophy professor at Palm Beach Atlantic University and a former staff with a division of Cru called Faculty Commons. Another person interviewed is an undergraduate student at Ohio State, a student leader with Cru, and a person of color. The final person interviewed is an undergraduate student at Ohio State that presently has no religious affiliation and no background in church.

Discovery Statement

Considering Christian faculty at The Ohio State University, we've discovered these Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact on campus, which is caused by the Church having not adequately invested in Christian faculty to live out their missional vocation at the university, and because our culture reinforces the irrelevance of religion to academic pursuits. If solved, it would mean Christians on campus would be developed to integrate faith into their academic lives while living on mission, and non-Christians would be attracted to faith in Christ.

Key Insights from the Discovery Workshop

The original NPO said that Christian faculty are not well-positioned for missional impact on campus. Though the stakeholders agreed that this statement was probably true, they suggested that it is too vague, particularly as it pertains to the phrase "not well-positioned." We were able to gain some clarity about this idea, concluding this concept merited being parsed out. The stakeholders suggested there is both an issue related to relationships on the one hand, and related to knowledge and skill on the other. Regarding relationships, Christian faculty are typically lacking any connection to the various Christian student organizations on campus. They are also mostly disconnected relationally from Christian faculty on campus, especially faculty who work in different colleges and departments. Regarding knowledge and skill, Christian faculty often do not know how their position and work on campus might intersect with God's mission in the world.

As we discussed why this NPO exists, one insight that was particularly helpful is that the systems and structures of the academy inhibit Christian faculty from integrating their faith with their role on campus. There is much about the structure of the secular university that perpetuates this NPO. Another key insight behind why this NPO exists is that the Church has not adequately invested in Christian faculty to overcome the structural challenges in the academy mentioned above. There are factors internal to the Church that have contributed to this NPO.

One-On-One Interview Discoveries

In my interview with a fourth-year undergraduate Christian student, I learned that during his years in college he has not had any professors publicly acknowledge that they were a Christian; as far as he is aware he has never had a Christian professor. Though he has been very involved in Cru these last several years, he described a cognitive dissonance between his faith practices and his academic life. He expressed a desire for relationships with Christian professors that would support him and help him to resolve this dissonance.

In regard to my interview with a third-year undergraduate student without a church background who is spiritually seeking, he said that he has only had one professor in college that has spoken about their Christian faith. This Christian professor not only mentioned their faith to the class, but took the initiative to initiate relationships with their students outside the classroom, for which he was glad to take advantage. He remarked that this professor helped influence him to even consider the truthfulness of the Christian faith, mostly because he felt cared for by the professor; this student has been attending Bible discussion groups with Cru for the first time in his life this fall.

My final personal interview was with a philosophy professor in Florida and former Cru staff member. As we discussed the findings from the discovery workshop he made an interesting statement. He suggested that there is a philosophical reason deeper than the reasons mentioned above for the existence of this NPO. Behind these realities is the belief in Western civilization that there exists a secular realm and a sacred realm that are distinct and separate from one another. This philosophical belief has been assumed and incorporated by the Church, the academy, and the society at large. His suggestion was that unless my research addressed this sacred and secular divide, I would risk a superficial response to this NPO.

Synthesis

The key difference between the perspectives of the stakeholders in the discovery workshop and the perspectives of the one-on-one interviews had to do with their location to the NPO. The stakeholders were closer to being the primary audience of the NPO; their perception of the problem was more focused on Christian faculty feeling relationally disconnected from other Christian faculty and the Christian ministries on campus. The idea that Christian faculty have not been adequately developed to live on mission on campus was less intuitive for the Christian faculty. It took some reflection for them to realize how few examples they have to emulate.

The perspective of the undergraduate students interviewed was that Christian professors were either rare or invisible; they expressed a felt need for Christian faculty to be relationally available but also to help them make intellectual sense of the legitimacy of the Christian faith at the university. The insight of the philosophy professor that was interviewed, regarding the problem of the secular and sacred divide in the West, seems to be critically important to understanding the root causes behind this NPO.

Next Steps

I would do well to do some further historical research on the development of the structures of Western university and the relegation of the Christian faith. Another area of research would be to understand how the Church has sought in various contexts to help Christian faculty and intellectuals to live on mission in the university setting. Research might also be warranted for a better theological understanding of Christian vocation, thinking more broadly about the intersection of faith and work. It also seems important to pursue a better philosophical understanding of the secular and sacred divide, while pursuing clarity on biblical perspectives on the matter. If this NPO were addressed, a main beneficiary would be undergraduate and graduate students; it might be worth exploring a better understanding of Generation Z. Finally, I might pursue research on how Christian faculty might build hospitable relationships with others in the university setting.

Discovery Workshop Documentation

Discovery Workshop Activity 1

REVIEW THE INITIAL NPO:

Christian faculty are typically not well-positioned for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

WHAT IS THE KEY ISSUE YOU ARE TRYING TO ADDRESS AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

1. Lack of clear picture of what a missional impact looks like for Christian faculty on a secular campus.
2. Time!
3. Lack of support of others moving in the same direction for encouragement and accountability.
4. Pressure in the sciences (probably all areas) to suppress personal religious beliefs.
5. May not be on their radar. They may not view their mission as part of "the missional impact of The Kingdom."
6. They may think their mission in relation to God is carried out not as part of their work at the university. That their job does not encompass this aspect of their life.
8. They may not be prepared to live out God's mission at work or at home. Never been trained. Never had the vision cast through "church."
9. How does this fit with the actual life of the professor?
10. I think some people forget that there are Christian faculty that they can engage with.

WHO IS THIS AN NPO FOR?

1. Christian faculty
2. Students (I want to second this response!)
3. Non-believing faculty
4. The young bright minds. Need to build the blocks to lay the foundation of the future
5. Leaders of Christian ministries/Bible studies/etc. associated with Ohio State
6. Parents/families of the students (I might say less-so than other responses since students seem to be looking for independence. (?) Just a thought!)

7. Local church
8. Society at large
9. Focus on developing support groups and training for the faculty to better reach students

WHAT SOCIAL/CULTURAL FACTORS SHAPE THE NPO?

1. I think that Christian faculty are somewhat forgotten; few people think of engaging with them and make an effort to do so.
2. It is also hard to relate, as faculty, to where students are sometimes. Although we've been there, times and society change. The difficulty, I would say, stems from students more than faculty.
3. Activities may segregate students from faculty and make faculty seem like the "other" and "above." Too ivory tower.
4. Anemic broader church missional culture
5. Playing minesweeper; unknown minefield
6. Power dynamic between faculty and students
7. Christian faith marginalized / mocked in larger academic setting
8. Perhaps more difficult to advance academically if you are "out" with your faith
9. Fast pace of life - individuals not reflecting on life and their own values - so lack of integration of authentic self in different aspects of work/life
10. Not taken seriously when reporting scientific findings even when they aren't related to your faith (peer-review process)
11. Personalities and differences among faculty could be unified differently
12. Professors fighting a losing battle? Rarity

WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE THAT THIS IS WORTH THE INVESTMENT?

1. Resonates! I'm glad to hear that someone is considering this, and I hope that there are actionable results from this research.
2. This research could help faculty fulfill God's callings in their lives; there may be many things that God is calling us to do, but reaching out to students/colleagues/etc. could be a part of that for many faculty.

3. Eternal rewards - privilege of working with God - great commission - obedience to Christ. Great joy in life
4. Important to reach students in the formative years as they begin (or maybe finish) figuring the world out. Providing the counter to a world-first/only view is important
5. Personal encounters with people.
6. Changes lives - potential to change academic milieu
7. It's important to challenge limited views of Christianity and break down barriers in/out of academia so that the Word can be more effectively preached!
8. Christian faith should be embraced as an option! Yes!
9. Christian faculty can be a much healthier example of what it means to be "Christian" than the examples that some students/people may currently have. (maybe more applicable to their future careers too)

DISCUSS HOW YOU MIGHT THINK OF THIS NPO IN A DIFFERENT WAY. HOW MIGHT YOU REFRAME IT?

1. Related to the question above: who is this for? Is the goal to equip the Christian faculty [build]? Is the goal to develop effective ways of reaching non-believers? [win]. Is the goal to mobilize more Christian faculty to engage missionally? [send]
2. If you were more specific about "well-positioned" and "missional impact" would it potentially clarify your steps?
3. Is well-positioned quite right? What qualifies a faculty member as well-positioned or not?
4. Would it help to be more specific about missional impact? How do you know if faculty members are achieving missional impact? Is this measurable?
5. Maybe "well-prepared" or "supported" instead of/alongside of "well-positioned"
6. Use the word "connected"

RESTATE THE NPO IF ANY CHANGES ARE PRUDENT AND AGREE UPON A PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE USING THE FORMULA:

Considering _____ Christian Faculty _____ (audience), we've discovered _____ they are typically disconnected and ill-prepared for missional impact at The Ohio State University_(NPO).

Discovery Workshop Activity 2

REVIEW THE ADAPTED NPO:

Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

IF THIS OPPORTUNITY WERE ADDRESSED, WHAT WOULD IT MEAN FOR THE AUDIENCES?

Christian faculty

1. Talk about Jesus with non-believers.
2. Build friendships with other faculty and take steps to get to know students.
3. Seek out relationships with students to talk about Christ.
4. Feel less isolated from other Christian faculty and students.
5. Feel like there is greater purpose in their current situation, e.g. hopefully a clearer vision of God's purpose in planting them where they are.
6. Empowered to talk more naturally about their own faith and the Christian faith in general
7. Reach out to other faculty and students more - just to get connected and be others-focused.
8. More intentional.

Christian graduate students

1. Talk about Jesus with non-believers.
2. Relationally connect with faculty and students.
3. Feel like they will have a better example of being a professor who believes in Christ (how to share with others and navigate the academic space).
4. They would have a vision for how their own career might impact students and other faculty who don't know Christ yet.
5. Approach Christian faculty for more discussions about faith and their discipline. (I second this!)
6. Be more bold/confident with their faith when taking jobs in academia (or elsewhere).
7. Engage with more opportunities to meet with and cultivate relationships with Christian faculty.

8. Be more authentic because their faith and studies would be more integrated.

Christian undergraduate students

1. Emboldened to talk about Jesus with non-believers by the examples of their teachers doing that.
2. Clearer picture of integration of their faith with their field of study.
3. See a person of authority in their life that exemplifies Christian living.
4. Seek more personal advice /counsel from Christian faculty.
5. Be empowered by role model of faculty.
6. Feel less marginalized in academic culture.
7. Recognize that there are Christians on campus, especially Christian faculty, and not just a few but a substantial number to show that Christians have a place in academia. (Hard to express what I mean here.)

Non-Christian students

1. Expand their plausibility structures.
2. Provides a new pathway to reach Christ.
3. Cause them to reflect on their own spiritual journey and the reality of Christ being the Son of God.
4. Respect for credibility of Christian faith.
5. 1 Peter 3. "...ashamed of their slander"
6. Recognize presence of Christians on campus, understanding that it's meaningful. The Christian voice is worth hearing. (Probably a better way to say that.)

Non-Christian faculty

1. Expand their plausibility structures.
2. Respect for Christian faith through seeing it authentically lived out.
3. Provides a new pathway to reach Christ.

4. Give credence that the work done by Christian faculty is good work and deserves acceptance based on scientific merit (and shouldn't be thrown out because of personal beliefs).

5. 1 Peter 3. "...ashamed of their slander"

6. Recognize presence of Christians on campus, understanding that it's meaningful. The Christian voice is worth hearing. (Probably a better way to say that.)

WHAT THEMES WERE REPEATED?

1. Relationships, authentic (I think this is a big theme.)
2. Advocacy for the legitimacy of Christianity in academia
3. Opportunities for visibility, attempting to influence positive change
4. Model of Christian living
5. Wrestling with plausibility structures open to the existence of God

WHAT ARE THE OUTLIERS?

1. Internal change in Christian faculty/students. (How they feel, e.g. more connected, confident, etc.) JOY!
2. God is glorified
3. Missional calling
4. Sticking it to the larger academic community

WHY WOULDN'T THEY SAY (THINK, FEEL, DO) THAT NOW?

1. Academia isn't structured to support the engagement of Christians? (Not exactly what I'm trying to say. I can try to clarify.) It's not our purpose in being here, from academia's point of view, perhaps? Religion, in general, is marginalized, if not ejected.
2. Belief that there isn't any room in academia for personal beliefs
3. Fear (societal pressures to keep beliefs hidden)
4. Lack for respect/credibility of Christian faith in academia
5. Not taking the time, especially to learn how to have conversations and have them with people that have other points of view/convictions
6. Non-believers: Ignorance, prejudice, etc.

Discovery Workshop Activity 3

THE FIVE WHYS

Each participant will attempt to write out 5 layers of reasons as to why this is an opportunity that needs to be addressed.

PhD Student in Chemical Engineering

1. Why are faculty disconnected and ill-prepared?

A: Lack of training

2. Why is there a lack of training for faculty?

A: No focus on creating training or executing on that training

3. Why is there no focus on creating training?

A: Pushback from society to leave religion out of academia

A: More profitable avenues of reaching people for Christ

There is no way to efficiently connect with faculty that could benefit from training (or to help develop the training) (This loops back to the problem statement again)

College of Medicine Professor

1. Christian faculty don't realize they have a Christian mission at The Ohio State University

2. Christian faculty have compartmentalized the expression of their faith from their secular work

3. The academy does not welcome (may actually marginalize) the Christian faculty's Christian mission on campus.

4. Christian faculty have no vision for their missional impact on campus

5. Christian faculty don't have the skills necessary to navigate and be on mission for Christ on campus.

Geography Professor

1. Perhaps Christian faculty feel like they're going at it all on their own. Why?

2. They are not connected to other Christians on campus, faculty or otherwise. Why?

3. Perhaps they seek out Christian organizations, but none are good fits for them, or even if they could be, they're not very welcomed. Why?

4. Christian faculty might not be the target demographic of the organizations they contact, so they are marginalized. Why?
5. Organizations are not equipped to engage Christian faculty. Why?
6. Christian faculty are few enough that it's hard to know them as a group? Why?
7. Faculty positions are few and Christians are even fewer among them. Why?
8. Because, good grief, this is a broken world, and not everyone acknowledges their need for Christ. Why?
9. We're humans and dumb as sheep! Why?
10. God made us that way. Why?
11. Only God knows.

Cru Senior Leader

1. They have not been equipped to think missionally about their lives.
2. Lack of differentiation between a job and a vocation.
3. Little experience with being mentored or disciplined.
4. They have not been around contexts where discipleship has been a priority.
5. Local churches and Christian organizations are ill-equipped to prepare people to live missionally.

SEEK TO BUILD CONSENSUS AS TO THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ROOT CAUSES.

1. Who are the Christian faculty, as a whole and as individuals? (Christian faculty don't even know others, except for themselves individually.) Also, lack of unity among Christian faculty?
2. They have not been equipped to think missionally about their lives.
3. Societal pressures to keep religion out of academia (Yes, I second this!)
4. No awareness or ownership of vision and lack of skills

Discovery Workshop Activity 4

PUT IT TOGETHER

Considering ____Christian faculty_____(audience), we've discovered ____Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact_____(NPO), which is caused by ____the Church has not adequately invested in Christian faculty to live out their missional vocation at the university, while our culture reinforces the irrelevance of religion to academic pursuits_____(root cause). If solved, it would mean ____Christians on campus would be developed to integrate faith into their academic lives, while living on mission, and non-Christians would be attracted to faith in Christ_____(outcome).

LAST COMMENTS TO HELP GUIDE RESEARCH:

Keep your eyes on the road: As I continue researching this NPO, what should I be sure to examine?

1. Data on Christian faculty population.
2. Survey of faculty. Data on background.
3. How have faculty been engaged in mission previously?
4. Campus groups - have they looked at the problem?
5. Individual expressions

Look over your shoulder: As I continue researching this NPO, what are potential blind spots that I might explore?

1. Attempts to suppress ministry on campus?
2. Lack of time
3. Negative repercussions

Watch for downed trees in the road: As I continue researching this NPO, what are potential pitfalls that I might avoid?

1. Need to stay focused
2. Need to develop synthesis

One-Page Post-Workshop Message to Stakeholders

Dear Stakeholder,

Thank you again for your time, your interest, and your investment in my research project. You have helped to provide not only information and new questions, but significant moral support. I wanted to briefly review with you the fruit of our labor. Below I have sought to provide a synthesis of the key elements of our discussions:

Considering Christian faculty, we've discovered Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact, which is caused by the Church having not adequately invested in Christian faculty to live out their missional vocation at the university, while our culture reinforces the irrelevance of religion to academic pursuits. If solved, it would mean Christians on campus would be developed to integrate faith into their academic lives, while living on mission, and non-Christians would be attracted to faith in Christ.

Would you kindly let me know if there is something significant that you think ought to be changed, removed, or added related to this synthesis? I want to reiterate that your feedback in this research process has been tremendous in helping me to understand the nature of the problem described above, and where my research must go from here. May your contribution bear fruit in peoples lives for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Aaron Badenhop

One-On-One Interviews Documentation

Interview with Cru Undergraduate Student Leader

NPO: *Considering ___Christian faculty__(audience), we've discovered ___Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact_____(NPO), which is caused by ___the Church has not adequately invested in Christian faculty to live out their missional vocation at the university, while our culture reinforces the irrelevance of religion to academic pursuits_____(root cause). If solved, it would mean ___Christians on campus would be developed to integrate faith into their academic lives, while living on mission, and non-Christians would be attracted to faith in Christ_____(outcome).*

WHAT SEEMS ACCURATE OR RINGS TRUE TO YOU?

He says he doesn't see OSU professors bringing Christian faith to campus. Office hours are such an influential time, but Christian students have their faith being mocked. Has personally experienced his faith being looked down upon by Anthropology professors who say: "Faith is not fact-based". He told a story about missionaries being mocked by a professor. Not a single example of a Christian professor displaying how Christianity can mesh with academics. This student had "grasped at straws" when he had a Ghanaian math professor thinking he must be a Christian because of the Christian culture in Ghana, but even this professor had rejected his cultural upbringing.

HAVE YOU FELT ANYTHING IS LACKING IN YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE RELATED TO CHRISTIAN PROFESSORS?

He wishes Christian professors would hold up their faith alongside their teaching. Why do non-Christian profs get to bring their beliefs and morality to the classroom? Cognitive dissonance from faith to what people are learning in the classroom. An event that Cru held with Christian philosopher Gregory Ganssle was actually helpful for resolving this cognitive dissonance. Wonders if most Christian students have a closet full of unaddressed doubts.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE COULD BE TRUE OF YOUR EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN PROFESSORS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM?

Investing in relationships, seeking to identify where students are at spiritually. They could pay attention to even the clothes students are wearing, like t-shirts of different Christian student

organizations. Professors could subtly advocate for Cru just by acknowledging the t-shirt. Would love to see profs living their faith visibly, raising a faith flag.

Interview with Non-Christian Undergraduate Student

NPO: *Considering ____Christian faculty_____(audience), we've discovered Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact_____(NPO), which is caused by ____the Church has not adequately invested in Christian faculty to live out their missional vocation at the university, while our culture reinforces the irrelevance of religion to academic pursuits_____(root cause). If solved, it would mean ____Christians on campus would be developed to integrate faith into their academic lives, while living on mission, and non-Christians would be attracted to faith in Christ_____(outcome).*

WHAT SEEMS ACCURATE OR RINGS TRUE TO YOU?

This student has had only one professor that has made known their spiritual beliefs in his 2.5 years in college. This Christian professor is the only one that has taken any personal interest in him. He has not had the experience of hearing from or connecting to Christian faculty otherwise.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE RELATING TO CHRISTIAN PROFESSORS?

This one professor (mentioned above) spent time eating lunch with students outside the classroom setting. This professor took the time to learn about their students. This has been the only professor he has had that has taken any interest in him, and this was meaningful to him.

DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD TAKE A CHRISTIAN PROFESSOR'S VIEWS ABOUT RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY MORE SERIOUSLY THAN OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Yes, he says he would take what they have to say more seriously than most. However, he is not sure that would be the case without experiencing the genuine care of this Christian professor. Their position as a professor alone might not be enough without relationship.

Interview with Philosophy Professor and Former Cru Staff

NPO: Considering ___Christian faculty_____(audience), we've discovered ____Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact_____(NPO), which is caused by ____the Church has not adequately invested in Christian faculty to live out their missional vocation at the university, while our culture reinforces the irrelevance of religion to academic pursuits_____(root cause). If solved, it would mean ____Christians on campus would be developed to integrate faith into their academic lives, while living on mission, and non-Christians would be attracted to faith in Christ_____(outcome).

WHAT SEEMS ACCURATE OR RINGS TRUE TO YOU?

He says the problem is accurate, but he'd like to know more about what I mean when I say that faculty are "disconnected". He remarked that Cru doesn't know how to utilize faculty as faculty. He said their work causes so many pressures. Christian faculty do not know what missional impact looks like.

WHAT SEEMS INACCURATE OR INCOMPLETE?

A deeper root - sacred/secular split. A metaphysical issue shared by Christians and secular culture. In the West we no longer see the world as God-bathed. Disenchantment - we don't delight in God's world. We need re-enchantment.

AS I PURSUE RESEARCH ON THIS TOPIC, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU HAVE FOR ME? WHAT SHOULD I BE SURE TO LOOK INTO IN MY CONTEXT OR TO READ?

1. Ch. 3 in The Divine Conspiracy by Willard
2. Cultural Apologetics by Dr. Gould
3. Hans Boersma - Reenchantment
4. Anti-intellectualism and fragmentation and understanding of human flourishing
5. Consider root causes (philosophical/theological, historical, sociological and practical)
6. Cru has a faulty theory of culture change - see James Davidson Hunter - "To change the world". Culture changes from top-down.
7. Theology of mission.
8. Wendell Berry - an essay quoted "The Loss of the University" Home Economics
9. James K.A. Smith
10. What seems to be working with Cru's Faculty Commons ministry? What isn't working?
11. Professors are rewarded through competition, the vision of the good life is oriented around academic rewards - the struggle with the idols of the academy
12. Global Scholars .org/net American scholars sent overseas - former Cru - Stan Oakes

13. 4-D ministry from Dr. Gregory Ganssle
14. What does it mean to be a public-facing engineer for example. What does it mean to be a public intellectual?
15. The great tradition. The sacramental vision of the world. William Temple - lecture 19 (1934)

Appendix B– Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay

Introduction

Many of the most significant agents of change for God's mission in the world are struggling to live out their God-given calling. University professors have a platform of influence that is arguably unparalleled in Western Civilization. Faculty and scholars are the gatekeepers of human knowledge, shaping and molding future leaders in almost every sphere in our society. University professors are the authorities. They are the experts our culture relies upon for our understanding of reality. Sadly, most Christian faculty are ill-equipped to integrate their faith with their vocational life, while sitting on the sideline of God's mission in the secular university setting. This paper seeks a biblical, theological, historical, and contemporary background for what will be necessary to bring change to this problem.

Section 1: Biblical and Theological Foundations

The Missional Professor in the Biblical World

Though the entire Bible is relevant to the life of the Christian professor as the "the whole counsel of God"²⁰⁰, this paper begins with a focus on three biblical texts that serve as a foundation for Christian faculty. The first text will be the prologue of the Gospel of John (Jn 1:1-18) with discussion of its frequent use of *logos*. Though this passage is likely most well-known for its relation to Christological debates, the focus will be on this text's relationships with the creation account in Genesis 1, with the personified use of "wisdom" before creation in Proverbs 8:22-32, and with the ancient Greek philosophers' concept of *logos* which predated the authorship of John's Gospel. This text has some important implications for a Christian understanding of epistemology, the Christian worldview, and the life of the mind.

A second text, Matthew 5:13-16, will reflect on Jesus' metaphorical use of "salt" and "light" as an identity for followers of Jesus. We will place these verses within their literary context of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, while paying special attention to the historical context. Is 42:6 and its use of "light" as an identity for Israel offers an important reference from the Old Testament. Finally, Matthew 5:13-16 will be placed in reference to the metanarrative of the Mission of God, with implications for a Christian professor seeking to live on mission.

A discussion of life in the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:25 will conclude this section. This text will serve as a reference point for a discussion about Christian spirituality and practices, with implications for Christian faculty in context of the secular academy, where there is an emphasis on knowing and doing without reference to God.

200. WCF 1.6.

Textual Discussions

LOGOS IN JOHN 1:1-18

The Gospel of John begins with an immediate echo of the opening of the Bible in Genesis 1. The resonance with Genesis does not end with the phrase “in the beginning” but continues with an emphasis on “the Word.” Throughout Genesis 1 God speaks and creation obeys. Wright highlights that the power of God’s speaking is not limited to Genesis, but in many passages in the Old Testament God “acts by means of his ‘word’.”²⁰¹ In some such texts “the word of the Lord” is even personified as in Psalm 147:15.²⁰²

To further elucidate the biblical context of the Gospel of John’s use of *logos*, alongside this theme of “the word” personified in the Old Testament is the role of “wisdom” in creation. The writer of Proverbs imagines that God created the world by wisdom, personifying “Lady Wisdom” as existing before creation and being present in the creation of the world.²⁰³ Jewish sages and poets pondered the connection between the wisdom of God and God’s eternal word, and this imagery was used by the writer of the Gospel of John as a “garment ready made for the figure of Jesus.”²⁰⁴ The main point of these ruminations on the role of wisdom in creation in Proverbs is that “Yahweh founded the world by this ‘wisdom’ and that true human wisdom is found by following it.”²⁰⁵

Greek philosophy’s use of *logos* is equally important to this discussion. *Logos* was thought to be the “organizing structure of the world, the blue-print and pattern of how things came into being and hold together.”²⁰⁶ In the popular ancient stoic philosophy, the *logos* provided “the rational order of the universe” as it supplied “the standard for conduct and for the proper ordering of life for the rational person.”²⁰⁷ The Jews would not have expected the wisdom of God to come in flesh, but the Greeks would not have expected that the *logos* could ever be called a person. “This is a radical metaphysic.”²⁰⁸ Though the person of Jesus is the central foundation of knowledge and

201. N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone Part 1 Chapters 1-10*, vol. 5 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 4.

202. D. H. Johnson, “Logos,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I.H. Marshall, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 482.

203. See Pr 3:19, 8:22-31.

204. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, “Christ as Wisdom,” (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 957.

205. C. G. Bartholomew, “Wisdom Books,” In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 121.

206. Jonathan T. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2020), 70-71.

207. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993) 275.

208. Pennington, *Jesus*, 71.

wisdom, because of the fall everyone “knows the Logos, but everyone refuses to apprehend him.”²⁰⁹ This helps make sense of the current culture of the academy in the West, in which consideration of the existence of God is considered antithetical to the pursuit of knowledge.

SALT AND LIGHT IN MATTHEW 5:13-16

Near the outset of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus tells his followers that they are “the salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” Jesus is bringing to the fore what was already supposed to be true of God’s people, based upon Isaiah 42:6; Israel was called to be a light, to live in such a way as to attract the nations into a covenant relationship with God.²¹⁰ Whatever continuity there might be in Christians’ identity as “light” with God’s vocation for Israel as seen in Isaiah, there is also a new, revolutionary mission because it is centered on Jesus himself.²¹¹ Those who follow Jesus are those who reflect the light of their Lord, they are to “expel the darkness of evil in the world.”²¹²

It is often noted that salt served as an agent for improving taste and for preservation of food.²¹³ Theologian Anthony Bradley has emphasized an overlooked use of salt in the ancient world; that of being a fertilizer.²¹⁴ Though each of these uses of salt might be relevant to the metaphor that Jesus employs, Bradley argues that its fertilizing properties were more central to the meaning of this and other texts where Jesus teaches using salt imagery. As the salt of the earth, Jesus’ followers are those that help to cultivate new life where there is deadness and dying.

Biblical scholar Christopher Wright says that these metaphors of salt and light make the point that Christians are to stand in contrast with a dark and corrupted world. Salt and light are both “confrontational” and “missional” metaphors; they challenge the status quo in a dark and dying

209. K Scott Oliphint. “Bavinck’s Realism, the Logos Principle, and Sola Scriptura.” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 72 (2010): 385.
<http://search.ebscohost.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001813702&scope=site>.

210. Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011) 39.

211. N. T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone Part 1 Chapters 1-15*, vol. 1 of Accordance electronic ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 39.

212. David Zac Niringiye, *The Church: God’s Pilgrim People* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015) 109.

213. Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*, Revised Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020) 91.

214. Anthony B Bradley, “You Are the Manure of the Earth: Jesus’ Famous Metaphor about Salt Is Actually about Fertilizer.” *Christianity Today* 60 (2016): 72-76.
<http://search.ebscohost.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAI8W161017001023&scope=site>.

world, while also being used for the larger purpose of transformation.²¹⁵ Professors who follow Jesus in the academy are no less called to live into their identity as salt and light in a university context where darkness and corruption is very much present, even if seemingly hidden. Instead, the light of Christian professors is often what is hidden.

The Life of the Spirit in Gal 5:25. When writing to the community of believers in Galatia, Paul is not only concerned with their doctrine, nor simply their intellectual assent to certain beliefs about faith in Jesus. The Christian life cannot be reduced to a moral set of rules.²¹⁶ What has changed these Christians' lives is something, or rather someone, beyond themselves; "the basis of their life is that they are those who 'live by the Spirit.'"²¹⁷

Bible scholar N.T. Wright argues that just because a Christian is indwelt with the Spirit, it does not mean that they are living accordingly. Following the Spirit's lead is not automatic. "Christian virtue, including the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit, is both gift of God and the result of the person of faith making conscious decisions to cultivate this way of life and these habits of heart and mind."²¹⁸ The academy not only fosters avoidance of the consideration of God's existence in the pursuit of knowledge, it also fosters a human-dependent and human-centered approach to life. Heiser argues that even Christians in the West have been influenced by modernism to keep "the unseen world at arm's length."²¹⁹ Christian faculty will need to intentionally employ spiritual disciplines to cultivate a Spirit-filled life on campus.

Synthesis of Themes, Values, and Commitments

Theologian Lesslie Newbigin wrote that the ancient church could have avoided persecution by the Roman authorities if it proposed a personal, private religion. However, the early church proclaimed that "Jesus is Lord," a universal claim that clashed with the empire. The Lordship of Jesus was not relevant only to personal salvation, but to the culture, its politics, and its philosophies. "The Christian mission is thus to act out in the whole of the life of the whole world the confession that Jesus is Lord of all."²²⁰

215. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010) 236.

216. N.T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009) 146.

217. L. Ann Jervis, *Galatians*, vol. 9 of *New International Biblical Commentary*. Accordance electronic ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 150.

218. N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2012) 197.

219. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015) 17.

220. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995) 17.

Christian faculty must therefore seek a life on campus that demonstrates by word and deed that Jesus is Lord of the academy and the foundation of human knowledge and wisdom. Such Christian faculty will need to educate themselves in ways the secular academy will not have educated them; they will need to grapple with the common worldview their discipline espouses, while connecting their expertise with the Christian meta-narrative.²²¹ They will discern the hidden idols embraced in their academic disciplines, exposing these idols' empty promises and pointing people to true life in Christ.²²² They will seek ways to use their platform to support Christian organizations on campus in their proclamation of the gospel and their discipleship of believers. And they must do this with great intentionality to practice what they preach, to depend upon the Holy Spirit in the pursuit of a virtuous life.

Section 2: Topic History and Key Voices

Topic History

JESUS THE PHILOSOPHER

The idea that religion is a part of life that is separate and distinct from public knowledge and learning is far from a biblical assumption. "Biblical faith had no room for anti-intellectualism; instead, faith and learning were mutually supportive and mutually enriching."²²³ The ancient biblical authors understood that they were making public claims to truth and knowledge. "The story of the Bible tells us the way the world really is."²²⁴

A discussion about higher learning in Western antiquity must include a discussion about ancient philosophy. Pennington has noted that the discipline of philosophy (the love of wisdom) was different from our contemporary situation in the secular academy. Ancient philosophy was not about obscure speculation that often seems detached from reality. "Rather, it was a way of life, a way of being in the world. This way of being was rooted in a way of seeing or understanding how the world really is."²²⁵ Philosophy in the ancient world was not a narrow academic discipline but was an attempt at holistically understanding reality so that human beings might flourish.

221. Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2016) 157.

222. Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2011), xxiv.

223. Arthur Frank Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001) 5.

224. Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008) 3.

225. Pennington, *Jesus*, 21.

Ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle did not live in an ivory tower isolated from real life and real relationships. Rather, they gathered disciples to whom they could not only teach their theories, but they modeled the life they taught, sharing life together in schools.²²⁶ Ancient philosophers explored both physics and metaphysics; it discussed ethics and politics. It was about the “good life,” referring to “the habits of practiced wisdom that produce in the human soul deep and lasting flourishing.”²²⁷ It was these philosophical schools that would become the model of education, that would likewise become the bedrock of Western civilization.²²⁸

As important as it is to understand Jesus’ identity as Jewish messiah, it is also essential to understand Jesus and the early church within an ancient Greco-Roman culture deeply influenced by philosophy. When Jesus brought together a band of disciples, he was not narrowly setting apart clergy for sacred ministry. Pennington argues that Jesus positioned himself not only as a Jewish messiah, but as a Jewish philosopher in a Greco-Roman culture. His band of disciples were students in his philosophical school. Many of the images depicting Jesus that were created in the early church era portray Jesus in the garb of Greek philosophers.²²⁹ The content and style of Jesus’ teaching was not limited to religious matters but touched on all the major topics that philosophers like Plato and Aristotle had discussed.²³⁰

This understanding of Jesus as philosopher is not only relevant for today’s professional philosophers but has implications for the PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) in every academic field. “In any discipline, as you go deeper and deeper into a subject, finally you reach those really fundamental questions that we usually take for granted. That is philosophy.”²³¹ To be a faithful Christian in any academic discipline one must seek to explore these deeper foundational questions at the foundation of their discipline; in this way, a professor might be a lover of wisdom in the way of Jesus.

CHRISTIAN THINKING IN ANCIENT ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria, located in modern-day Egypt, emerged as a significant city in the Greco-Roman world during the Ptolemaic era and continued its prominence for centuries, becoming the cultural center

226. Pennington, *Jesus*, 24.

227. *Ibid.*, 29.

228. *Ibid.*, 25.

229. *Ibid.*, 57.

230. Pennington, *Jesus*, 79.

231. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, A division of Baker Publishing Group, 2013) 9.

of the eastern Roman empire.²³² Alexandria was likely most well-known in the ancient world as a center of advanced studies. The city had developed not only a museum but what was considered the largest library of antiquity. "Different branches of scholarship blossomed during different periods in Alexandria's history. Under the Ptolemies study of the scientific disciplines advanced considerably, most notably in the fields of mathematics, mechanics, physics, geography and medicine."²³³

As the Christian religion grew throughout the Roman Empire, by the second century the Church was also established in Alexandria. Christians in Alexandria placed an emphasis on learning by founding a catechetical school, and by the third century Alexandria had become an important center of the Church.²³⁴ Philosopher Arthur Holmes has suggested that Christians in Alexandria sensed the need to keep pace with the intellectual development of those who participated in the learning of the pagan schools. They recognized that if they were going to be able to have an influence in which the gospel message could gain a hearing in this intellectually astute city, they would need to be able to engage the Greco-Roman philosophy being taught.²³⁵ As an example, Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* wrote of the good that can be found in pagan learning; Holmes writes that for Clement all learning was useful.²³⁶

Origen succeeded Clement at the catechetical school in Alexandria. Origen had grown up receiving a classical pagan education, while being brought up in his home by Christian parents who taught him the Christian scriptures. He studied deeply both Greek and Jewish philosophy. Origen made profitable use of his pagan education and knowledge of Greek philosophy, making significant contributions to biblical and theological scholarship, while also writing in apologetics in order to help remove intellectual barriers to faith in Christ.²³⁷ The scholarship of Clement of Alexandria and Origen achieved certain successes and suffered various failures, but they demonstrate how the early Christian leaders sought to intellectually engage the prominent ideas of their culture.

THE SOUL OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

The advent of Christendom in the West after Constantine meant the Church had gained immense cultural influence, including oversight of the institutions of higher learning. A Christian understanding of the world and of reality was assumed as universities emerged in Western Europe

232. A. D. Clarke, "Alexandria," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 24.

233. Clarke, "Alexandria," in DNTB, 27.

234. Clarke, "Alexandria," in DNTB, 25.

235. Holmes, *Building*, 16.

236. Ibid., 17.

237. Holmes, *Building*, 17.

in the medieval era, even while there were internal disputes within Christendom on the finer points of doctrine and methodology. Stemming from this tradition, the first universities that were founded in what would become the United States of America were tied to various Christian denominations. Harvard and Yale, some of the first universities in North America, began mainly as seminaries to educate Christian clergy for pastoral ministry. Historian George Marsden has noted that in towns and villages in Protestant lands during the first several centuries after the Reformation, "the clergyman would be the best educated citizen and education would be the key to his authority."²³⁸ The influence of the Church on higher learning was pervasive in early America.

When considering that Christian influence dominated higher learning in the West for more than a millennium, it is striking to note how quickly all of this changed. Marsden poignantly asks, "How was it that distinctively Christian teaching could be displaced so easily from the central and substantive role that it had held in American higher education for over two centuries and in the universities of Christendom for many centuries before that?"²³⁹

Though there is not space for a comprehensive answer to Marsden's question here, it is possible to summarize a key feature of this dramatic change. In the late 18th into the 19th centuries there had emerged a growing understanding in the academy that the Church ought not hold too close a grip on research and teaching in the university setting, even in traditionally Christian universities like Yale. It was understood that viewpoint diversity could benefit the university in its pursuit of truth; Marsden points out that this openness to diverse views was not inherently a bad approach. However, it caused a dilemma. If viewpoint diversity and academic freedom were championed, it became unclear how these historically Christian universities would maintain their Christian identity. It took relatively little time for a Christian understanding of reality to be seen as antithetical to the pursuit of truth in the university. "Standards for science that a priori excluded considerations of faith would become the norm."²⁴⁰ Academic freedom meant freedom from the imposition of biased religion, while upholding a supposedly impartial science and reason that assumed the irrelevance of God. The American university became a place where Christian belief had no place, save for one's private life. This is a legacy that lingers in the academy to this day, even while evangelical Christians themselves contributed to this reality by failing to sustain a "serious intellectual life."²⁴¹

238. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994) 37.

239. Marsden, *Soul*, 31.

240. *Ibid.*, 131.

241. Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008) 3.

Key Voices

Charles E. Cotherman

Church historian and pastor Charles E. Cotherman has written an important work entitled *To Think Christianly*.²⁴² Cotherman explores the history of Christian study centers, with special contemporary reference to the Consortium of Christian Centers, which tend to be geographically based on the edges of university campuses.²⁴³ A Christian study center is described in this way: "A Christian study center in its most basic form is a local Christian community dedicated to spiritual, intellectual, and relational flourishing via the cultivation of deep spirituality, intellectual and artistic engagement, and the cultivation of hospitable presence."²⁴⁴ Though they exist in diverse forms, Christian study centers are a growing movement of individuals and institutions that are dedicated to a "spiritually and intellectually engaged faith" on the university campuses they call home.²⁴⁵ For Cotherman, the roots of the Christian study center movement are traced back to two primary influences: L'Abri and Regent College.

L'Abri began in 1955 in the home of Francis and Edith Schaeffer.²⁴⁶ Francis Schaeffer had been a Presbyterian pastor, but as a missionary in Europe in 1951 he had a faith crisis that led him to deeply wrestle with his intellectual doubts about Christianity.²⁴⁷ Schaeffer had been challenged by the ideas and worldviews of those living in post-war Europe, and he desired an honest search for truth and a deep spirituality. This journey eventually led the Schaeffers to purchase a chalet near the village of Huemoz in the Swiss Alps, where they would invite others into their home for shared meals, for prayer, and rigorous intellectual discussions about the truthfulness of Christianity. They welcomed both non-Christian seekers and Christians wrestling with their faith, inviting them to bring their honest questions for personal discussion. L'Abri, which means "shelter," became a safe place for people's spiritual quest for truth, caring deeply about demonstrating to the world the existence of the God of Christianity.²⁴⁸

What started as a fledgling ministry by the Schaeffer family grew to have a ministry impact for people from all over the world. In spite of no real effort to publicize their ministry, people came to L'Abri to seek honest answers to their honest questions, and Francis Schaeffer's personal discourse

242. Charles E. Cotherman, *To Think Christianly: A History of L'Abri, Regent College, and the Christian Study Center Movement* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

243. See <https://studycentersonline.org>

244. Cotherman, *Think*, 8.

245. *Ibid.*, 10.

246. *Ibid.*, 15.

247. *Ibid.*, 16.

248. *Ibid.*, 19.

with people's doubts helped bring many to faith in Christ, while keeping others in the faith. Schaeffer embraced a Reformed theology that emphasized the sovereignty of God over all of life. This meant that biblical truth was not confined by the realm of religion, but that Christian thought was relevant to every academic discipline and to every vocation. "Through his books and the example of L'Abri, Schaeffer invited a generation of evangelicals to engage their minds and the world with a scope as wide as creation and confidence rooted in the trustworthiness of God."²⁴⁹

Cotherman also presents some shortcomings regarding Francis Schaeffer's intellectual engagement. Though he did have a divinity degree, his doctorates were given to him as honorary degrees. Schaeffer's intellectual work was "isolated from scholarly discourse."²⁵⁰ Even as other Christian scholars sought to encourage him toward greater engagement with other Christian scholars and thinkers, there grew a concern that Schaeffer was living in a "ghetto" of thought.²⁵¹ "L'Abri was a powerful imaginative force within evangelicalism, but its connection to the wider scholarly community was minimal."²⁵²

The second primary influence on the Christian study center movement is Regent College, spearheaded by a geographer by training, James M. Houston. Located on the edges of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, the purpose of Regent was two-fold. First, Regent was created to be a place where lay people could receive intensive theological education before entering fully into their careers in the secular workforce. Second, Regent was to be a center for Christian scholars from various academic fields to write and publish scholarly works as evangelistic witness.²⁵³

Houston was more concerned than Schaeffer about engagement with the academy. Cotherman remarks that Houston saw the academy as being "adrift" and "confused." Likewise, Houston was concerned about evangelical attitudes toward academic scholarship; many Christians were well-trained for their secular vocation but had a simplistic faith.²⁵⁴ Houston's intent on positioning Regent college to engage the academy meant that by 1973, Regent College was offering degrees that were affiliated with the University of British Columbia.²⁵⁵ Regent's emphasis on theological study, eventually including training for Christian clergy similarly to many seminaries, became a much stronger feature than a direct evangelical witness at the University of British Columbia. Regent has been able to bring Christian scholars to Vancouver for teaching its own theological curriculum, but

249. Cotherman, *Think*, 37.

250. *Ibid.*, 32.

251. *Ibid.*, 33.

252. *Ibid.*, 260.

253. *Ibid.*, 54.

254. *Ibid.*, 64.

255. *Ibid.*, 66.

this does not mean there is an organized missional strategy for Christian faculty employed by the university across the street.

Regarding the Christian study center movement that grew out of the innovation of L'Abri and Regent College, Cotherman sees the Center for Christian Study at The University of Virginia as a leading influence. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the Center for Christian Study in Charlottesville has experienced an ebb and flow of emphases. The center grew out of parachurch ministries that had been focused on evangelistic outreach at The University of Virginia. With respected faculty at the university on board like economist Ken Elzinga, the Center for Christian Study sought to have an intellectually robust Christian witness at the campus in the style of L'Abri.²⁵⁶ When David Turner was hired to lead the study center in 1978, Cotherman notes that "the daily operations moved in a Houstonian direction toward a greater emphasis on theological education of the laity."²⁵⁷ After some years of struggle to fulfill this goal, the center hired in the mid-1980s a director with a PhD in New Testament studies, Drew Trotter, to renew the center's goal to educate Christian laity; lay education continues to be an emphasis to this day.

Though there is variety among the various study centers that make up the Consortium of Christian Study Centers, it does seem a trend that the study centers emphasize the theological development of lay believers more than the gospel proclamation to non-Christians on their neighboring campuses. Having a building that is situated across the street from a secular university does not guarantee missional engagement with non-Christian lives.

Rick Hove and Heather Holleman

A work entitled *A Grand Story: An Invitation to Christian Professors* was written by Faculty Commons executive director Rick Hove and Penn State literature professor Heather Holleman.²⁵⁸ Faculty Commons is the faculty branch of a Christian parachurch organization existing at most secular university campuses across the country named Cru. In contrast with the work by Cotherman, *A Grand Story* is targeted specifically at Christian faculty working in secular universities. There is much to commend in this resource for Christian faculty, as Hove and Holleman seek to help Christian faculty to prioritize their faith and to live missionally on their campuses.

The book begins by elaborating on its title. Hove and Holleman want faculty to recognize what is often overlooked or even denied by Christian academics; that to be a Christian means living in a larger story than one's own individual life, a metanarrative.²⁵⁹ They highlight that one of the most significant changes that takes place in the maturation of the Christian professor is that they go from

256. Cotherman, *Think*, 189.

257. *Ibid.*, 211.

258. Rick Hove and Heather Holleman, *A Grand Story: An Invitation to Christian Professors* (Orlando, FL: Cru Press, 2017).

259. *Ibid.*, 8.

a “professor who is a Christian” to a “Christian who is a professor.”²⁶⁰ Holleman eloquently tells of her own experience while still in candidacy for her PhD when she realized that she longed for the meaning and purpose that would come from doing all she could to bring glory to God with all of her life, including all aspects of her life in the academic setting. “Research became an unearthing of God’s design,” and she began to “privately worship Jesus in every class.”²⁶¹ Hove and Holleman cast vision for living missionally by emphasizing how grand the person of Jesus Christ really is. “If Jesus is ultimately great, then he becomes the demarcation point for all substantive conversations.”²⁶² The authors also highlight how significant it is for Christian faculty to embrace their identity in Christ in the face of academic pressures that influence them to ground their identity in their academic performance and status.²⁶³

The heart of the book is the space given to Christian faculty to share about their personal experiences living in this grand story. Several different professors such as Ken Elzinga (mentioned above in discussion of the Center for Christian Study at the University of Virginia) share how their faith impacted their teaching philosophy, they tell stories about sharing in their classrooms about their faith, about praying for their students before and during their office hours, about inviting students into their homes, about publicly identifying as believers online, about mentoring college students and building relationships with them outside of the classroom, about developing loving relationships with other faculty, and about participating in Cru’s mission trips around the world. The experiences shared are practical and the stories are very compelling.

Finally, *A Grand Story* does speak to the intellectual life of the Christian professor. Hove argues that for the Christian professor there can be a “reverent curiosity” regarding one’s field of research as a means to discovering more about God through creation.²⁶⁴ The authors encourage academic excellence without making academic success an idol.²⁶⁵ They discuss “engaging the metanarrative” of one’s academic discipline including that discipline’s foundational presuppositions. Hove and Holleman encourage evaluation of the wider culture through their expertise as a Christian in their field, and how they might speak to falsehoods and distortions of reality that are common in culture.²⁶⁶ “Christian academics should invest energy into academic areas that are needed to defend the gospel, but there are a host of other possible areas of study that have the potential to open doors to discussion about the gospel.”²⁶⁷ They discuss how a Christian can do academic work

260. Hove and Holleman, *Grand Story*, 9.

261. *Ibid.*, 16-17.

262. *Ibid.*, 19.

263. *Ibid.*, 39.

264. *Ibid.*, 45.

265. *Ibid.*, 48.

266. *Ibid.*, 52.

267. *Ibid.*, 54.

that could contribute to human flourishing and bless the world.²⁶⁸ The authors lament with philosopher William Lane Craig that a typical Christian professor on a secular campus is “far more educated in his or her academic specialty than in the Bible or theology.”²⁶⁹

Paul M. Gould

The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor is a work by philosopher Paul M. Gould.²⁷⁰ Gould is a former Faculty Commons and Cru staff member. Having earned his PhD from Purdue University, Gould presently teaches courses in philosophy of religion at Palm Beach Atlantic University.²⁷¹ Gould’s background in campus ministry while also attaining PhD in philosophy at a respected public institution situates Gould well for a discussion about what it means for college professors to live missionally. His book shares some significant features with Hove and Holleman’s work.

The book begins by acknowledging that it is a twist on George Marsden’s work entitled *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.²⁷² Gould seeks to take the Christian professor beyond the possibility of being a Christian academic to the idea of being a professor living on God’s mission.²⁷³ A missional professor at a secular university lives with the aim of pointing others to see the greatness of Christ, causing non-believing students and professors “to examine their own beliefs and hearts in light of the gospel of Christ.”²⁷⁴ To be a missional professor, one must be able to locate their story within God’s story, not only because it is the greatest story ever told, but because it is “the one true story about the world.”²⁷⁵

For Gould, one of the biggest hindrances for Christian faculty living on God’s mission which surfaces throughout the book is what he calls compartmentalization, fragmentation, and disintegration.²⁷⁶ The culture of the university subtly influences Christian professors to embrace a divide between the sacred and the secular, and this tendency must be intentionally overcome with what he calls “integration.”²⁷⁷ In conversation with philosophers Moreland and Beckwith, Gould

268. Hove and Holleman, *Grander*, 57.

269. *Ibid.*, 160.

270. Paul M. Gould, *The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014).

271. Paul Gould, <http://www.paul-gould.com/about/>.

272. George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998).

273. Gould, *Outrageous*, 1.

274. *Ibid.*, 8.

275. *Ibid.*, 13.

276. *Ibid.*, 28.

277. *Ibid.*, 49.

highlights two kinds integration: conceptual and personal.²⁷⁸ Conceptual integration is about the Christian professor's thinking and worldview. The Christian professor must be able to do their academic work in a manner that fits with the biblical story. Likewise, the Christian professor must have continuity between their public and personal lives, where one's faith and virtue permeate all of life. "That is, all of our beliefs, emotions, and volitions ought to be rightly ordered with respect to Christ."²⁷⁹ The book has two further chapters which discuss developing the Christian mind and the Christian heart, respectively.

There is significant cause for Christian faculty to live the integrated life. The university influences not just students on campus, but all of society. "In short, the university sets the agenda for what is worth pursuing and what is plausibly true."²⁸⁰ Gould argues that contemporary universities create barriers to the advancement of God's mission of making Christ known, by presenting alternative beliefs that make Christianity seem to be implausible. The missional professor must be willing to diagnose and engage these competing ideas, motivated by God's love, to be able to be used by God through word and deed.²⁸¹

Gould also seeks to paint a picture in practical ways regarding what it might look like for a professor to live missionally, "embodying the gospel and pointing others to the One in whom there is life and light."²⁸² The missional professor must recognize that people are lost without Jesus, they must seek to join the Holy Spirit in removing obstacles to faith in Christ, they must be able to explain the gospel when opportunities arise, and point people to Christian ministries that can help nurture faith.²⁸³ Gould also tells personal ministry stories of Christian professors mentioned above, Ken Elzinga and Heather Holleman.²⁸⁴

The final chapter of the book is the most technical and philosophical. Gould seeks to provide a framework for Christian scholars to explore how God might want to redeem and transform one's academic discipline. He outlines what he calls the "anatomy of an academic discipline," explaining that all academic disciplines begin with "guiding principles," leading to "a guiding methodology," informing how the scholar approaches "a data set," all giving shape to "a guiding narrative."²⁸⁵ "The

278. Gould, *Outrageous*, 36.

279. *Ibid.*, 37.

280. *Ibid.*, 46.

281. *Ibid.*, 50.

282. *Ibid.*, 83.

283. *Ibid.*, 86-87.

284. *Ibid.*, 89.

285. *Ibid.*, 106.

missional imperative suggests that part of the Christian scholarly task is to seek to make gospel connections within the academic discipline."²⁸⁶

Section 3: Analysis

Agreements or Consensus

All three of these key voices are in agreement on several fronts. Christian faculty are not simply those who dispense information for the classroom setting, but they are persons that should value personal relationships with others. Christian professors should not only fulfill the role of researcher and teacher but should seek to invest their lives into the lives of others on campus. All three voices mention Dr. Ken Elzinga, and in particular his practice of inviting and welcoming students into his home. Whatever it means it for Christian faculty to follow Jesus in the university, it must involve being relationally open to others. God has Christian faculty positioned where they are for redemptive reasons, to be change agents for good on the campus according to God's plan. One of the central ways that professors can have a redemptive presence is by being willing to be a public witness for Christ.

Another point of agreement is the need for Christian faculty to have a growing personal faith themselves. The Christian academic is not just one who knows and one who does, but one who is holistically Christian. A Christian professor must be intentional about participating in practices that the Holy Spirit uses for spiritual formation, particularly prioritizing prayer and fellowship with other believers.

A last point of agreement is that Christian faculty should value the life of the mind. To be faithful to Jesus in the academy means being intentional about integrating one's faith with one's academic studies. A Christian professor would do well to think critically about the foundational ideas and assumptions commonly held within one's academic discipline, while considering how the gospel might both challenge or affirm these ideas.

Tensions

Most of the tensions one finds in reading these key voices are related to matters of emphasis. For Cotherman, the Christian study center movement highly values the life of the mind and the integration of faith and academic work. A major emphasis continues to be a Houstonian emphasis on helping lay people, particularly university students, to think Christianly. However, one can argue that the Christian study center movement tends to deemphasize the many practical ways that Christian scholars can have a personal ministry on campus, particularly to those on campus that are not naturally drawn to the programming of the study center. If the ministry of Francis Schaeffer and L'Abri was a formational influence on the Christian study center movement, one might wonder if

286. Gould, *Outrageous*, 111.

the movement has misplaced the Schaeffers' evangelistic heart and vision. The mission of L'Abri was focused on impacting people's lives through intellectually sound and personal evangelism. A direct engagement with the academy was not central to the Schaeffers' mission.

Hove and Holleman do a wonderful job of casting vision for God's mission on campus and in the world. They share the stories of professors that are using their roles at the university to make a tangible difference in the lives of faculty and students on campus. There is not a shortage of ideas regarding how a Christian professor could begin to take action to live on mission at the university. However, the value placed on the life of the mind is secondary. Though mentioned at certain points, less emphasis is made on the Christian professor integrating faith with their academic work.

In painting a picture of the life of the missional professor, Gould does well to place an equal emphasis on the life of the mind and the mission of God through a lifestyle of personal ministry. Gould manages to cast vision well for Christian professors to share their faith and mentor students, while also providing some thought-provoking paradigms for Christian faculty to think critically about how Christian theology intersects with their academic disciplines.

Gaps

A potential shortcoming among these voices is that they seem to assume an audience of individual Christian professors, or perhaps a small group of Christian professors. There is room for exploring how Christian faculty can have a more integrated role in undergraduate student ministries like Cru. There are often many campus ministers and undergraduate student leaders with Christian organizations on the university campus that are already seeking to live on mission. They have experience and inside knowledge of what Christian students and non-Christian students are facing on a personal level for which Christian faculty might fail to grasp. These campus ministries have many legitimate missional goals and strategies that could be enhanced or sharpened with the engagement of Christian faculty, but even willing faculty tend to be overlooked by campus ministry leaders. Often Christian professors are unaware of how God is at work in and through these ministries. For Christian faculty to live on mission, they must not only be in relationship with other Christian professors on campus, but there must be better communication and coherent strategies for these faculty to engage with existing campus ministries. This integration would help Christian professors to be able to make deeper connections between the life of the mind and mission of God on campus.

Appendix C—Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report

NPO Statement

Considering Christian faculty, we have discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

NPO Scope and Constraints

At the completion of this Doctor of Ministry degree, a pilot program will exist to help equip Christian faculty at The Ohio State University to integrate their faith with their position on campus and to live on mission. This pilot program will be open to faculty from any academic discipline at the main campus in Columbus. It will not include teaching assistants that are primarily graduate or professional students, nor those working in administration on campus. There are no financial costs currently foreseen in this initiative.

NPO Context

The NPO context focuses on Christian faculty at The Ohio State University main campus in Columbus, Ohio. These faculty will be at least loosely affiliated with a program of Cru at Ohio State called The Thompson Institute. The faculty invited to be involved may be from any denomination or non-denominational background that confesses the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. These faculty will need to be comfortable with the Cru Statement of Faith, as well as Cru's mission to help everyone in the Ohio State campus community to know someone that truly follows Jesus. We intend to involve a strong diversity of faculty from various generational and ethnic backgrounds. Christian faculty from any academic department will be welcome. These faculty will need to be willing to make time in their busy schedules to participate. Ideally, this work will involve ten to thirty faculty, and will function in concert with the mission of Cru at Ohio State.

Root Causes

Internal to the Church, Christian faculty have not been mentored and equipped to integrate their faith with their work in the academy, nor to grasp how their roles as professors at the university fit into God's mission in the world and on a secular campus. External to the Church, the culture of the academy tends to marginalize the relevance of the Christian faith. The professor has been formed through their education within the academy to assume God's irrelevance to their academic discipline. Professors are incentivized to believe that what matters in their work is academic success and rising in academic rank. Public witness as a Christian might inhibit Christian faculty from achieving these ends. The life of the mind tends to be emphasized over and against the heart, soul, and body. Those Christian faculty on campus that wish to live on mission have little time to explore how to do so, and have few models to follow. Undergirding these internal and external root causes are the philosophical effects of the Enlightenment, having separated the secular realm from the sacred realm in Western culture, for the Christian and non-Christian alike.

Three Big Ideas

Mission

This is a program that will help Christian faculty to better grasp God's mission in the world, while offering practical training on how faculty might have a public witness and invest in the development of Christian students.

Worldview

This is a program that will help Christian faculty to better grasp the meta-narrative of Scripture, how their academic discipline might fit within a Christian worldview, and how to think critically about the presuppositions commonly held by others in their academic field.

Formation

This is a program that will help Christian faculty to grow in self-awareness, to better grasp how God is at work in their lives, to live with greater integrity, wisdom, virtue, and emotional health.

Definition of "Done"

Christian faculty will be competent in having a public witness for Christ, they will grasp how their faith integrates with their academic discipline, and they will live lives that display the wisdom of Jesus' teachings.

Three Concept Pitches

Concept 1: Mission

- *Big Idea:* This is a program that will help Christian faculty to better grasp God's mission in the world, while offering practical training on how faculty might have a public witness and invest in the development of Christian students.
- *Audience:* For Christian faculty from any academic discipline at The Ohio State University main campus.
- *NPO:* Considering Christian faculty, we have discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.
- *Benefit:* Christian faculty feel increasingly motivated and competent to help non-believers come to faith in Christ and to meaningfully invest in Christian students' discipleship.

- *Approach*: Faculty will meet in-person with other Christian faculty on campus regularly for hands on training on having a public witness and will share their experiences for encouragement and accountability.
- *Risks*. One challenge will be that faculty are busy and may not have time. Another challenge is that some faculty may believe in Christ but may not be motivated to have a public witness for Christ.
- *Assumptions/hypotheses to test*: If Christian faculty feel more competent and supported to have a public witness, that their faith will be more visible to others and they will have an impact in other's lives on campus.
- *Benchmarks of success*: Christian faculty will regularly participate in these mission-equipping gatherings and will report on the tangible difference this is making.
- *Other Approaches*: Cru's ministry called Faculty Commons does offer some training in living on mission through their "Missional Moments" email campaign and through their conferences called "A Common Calling."

Concept 2: Worldview

- *Big Idea*: This is a program that will help Christian faculty to better grasp the meta-narrative of Scripture, how their academic discipline might fit within a Christian worldview, and how to think critically about the presuppositions commonly held by others in their academic field.
- *Audience*: For Christian faculty from any academic discipline at The Ohio State University main campus.
- *NPO*: Considering Christian faculty, we have discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.
- *Benefit*: Christian faculty will find greater meaning and purpose in their work in the academy, and will have a more holistic grasp of reality beyond being experts in their field
- *Approach*: Faculty will commit to reading on subjects related to developing a Christian worldview and will meet in-person with other Christian faculty to discuss the relevance of these readings to their academic discipline.
- *Risks*. Faculty might struggle to have the time and mental bandwidth for additional extra-curricular reading and meetings for discussion.
- *Assumptions/hypotheses to test*: If Christian faculty grasp how their academic discipline integrates with a Christian worldview, their public witness will be more compelling and influential in ways few other Christians will be able to accomplish.
- *Benchmarks of success*: Christian faculty must both read the material and show up regularly to discuss the content. They must be able to articulate the coherence of the Christian worldview with their academic discipline as well as the insufficiency of secularism's assumptions related to their field.

- *Other Approaches*: Both L'Abri and the Christian Student Center movement have plenty of material about the life of the mind and thinking Christianly. Philosopher Paul Gould has written well on this subject.

Concept 3: Formation

- *Big Idea*: This is a program that will help Christian faculty to grow in self-awareness, to better grasp how God is at work in their lives, to live with greater integrity, wisdom, virtue, and emotional health.
- *Audience*: For Christian faculty from any academic discipline at The Ohio State University main campus.
- *NPO*: Considering Christian faculty, we have discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.
- *Benefit*: Christian faculty will display the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5), and their public witness will not only make intellectual sense but will embody a way of life that will draw others to Christ.
- *Approach*: Faculty will meet regularly with a spiritual director for either group or individual spiritual direction, where they will be prompted to reflect on their inner life, how God might be working in their lives, and how God might work through their life for the benefit of others.
- *Risks*. Faculty have been formed to leave their true, authentic selves at the door of the university, so some faculty may struggle to be sufficiently open and vulnerable about their inner life. Also, some faculty might be resistant to spiritual direction because they come from a tradition that has ignored or criticized the practice.
- *Assumptions/hypotheses to test*: If Christian faculty submit themselves to the journey of spiritual formation through the guidance of a director, they will have a more vibrant faith, they will be more motivated to share God's love with others and will increasingly embody God's love to others.
- *Benchmarks of success*: Christian faculty must participate regularly in the spiritual direction opportunities provided, the spiritual directors could report on their cooperation, and after a school year or two the faculty could provide feedback on the experience and how it might have related to their public witness for Christ.
- *Other Approaches*: New College Berkeley is a Christian study center that includes programing on the life of the mind while also offering guidance in Ignatian spirituality.

Design Workshop Stakeholders

Cru Graduate Student Ministries director at OSU

Professor from College of Business at OSU

Professor of anatomy at OSU

Professor emeritus of Medicine at OSU

Professor from College of Business at OSU

One-On-One Interviews

Local pastor in the OSU campus area

Professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Co-founder of Rivendell Institute

Cru team leader at OSU and adjunct faculty at Ashland Theological Seminary

Annotated Bibliography

Bartholomew, Craig G., and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014.

The authors argue that the Bible, even with its many books and authors, is one, unified story. We are living in the midst of God's story. It is critical that we are oriented toward finding our place in this story, and this work assists the reader toward this aim. Bartholomew received his PhD in philosophy at Bristol, while Goheen received his PhD in theology at Utrecht. The authors stand in the broader Reformed tradition. The work is neither advanced theological studies, nor a beginner's book. Rather, it is a thoughtful, detailed, and accessible resource. The authors' work is for any thinking Christian. Goheen and Bartholomew argue that a firm grasp of the story of the Bible is an essential foundation toward holding a Christian worldview; the work is an important resource in equipping Christian faculty for a missional impact.

Hendricks, Michel, and Jim Wilder. *The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020.

The contemporary Church in the West has emphasized the left brain and has mostly ignored the right brain, to the detriment of believers' holistic Christian maturity. This book explores how recent discoveries in neurobiology compliment often overlooked teachings in Scripture to assist Christians in spiritual growth. Hendricks has extensive experience as a pastor of spiritual formation, and Wilder earned a PhD in clinical psychology. They have been rooted in the non-denominational ecclesial contexts. The book is written for a popular audience yet reflects expertise in neurobiology and theology. Wilder and Hendricks' book offers insight in helping Christian faculty toward growth in an underdeveloped part of their brain, their right brains, for the purposes of spiritual growth and relational connectedness.

Muehlhoff, Tim, and Richard Langer. *Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017.

Our contemporary society is a difficult place for Christians to have a voice in the public square of ideas. Many of the Christians that are attempting to influence society are doing more harm than good. Muehlhoff and Langer provide thoughtful reflections on how Christians could have a more faithful and persuasive public witness. Muehlhoff has a PhD in communication from University of

North Carolina, while Langer has a PhD in biblical studies from University of California, Riverside. They are both professors at Biola University in Los Angeles, a well-known evangelical institution. The book is written to Christians that want to have an impact on people's lives and who desire to change culture. Their book offers very important insights for Christian faculty that feel inadequate to have a distinctively Christian, public voice.

Design Workshop Description

The design workshop took place on Monday, November 1st, 2021 at 3pm and was hosted online via Zoom. The agenda of this workshop involved: introducing the stakeholders that would participate, providing an overview of the schedule and the desired outcomes, reviewing the NPO, reviewing a model that provides a framework for the three prototypes to be discussed, doing a context map exercise, brainwriting activities for each prototype, and a closing activity.

There were five stakeholders present for this workshop and they were the Cru Graduate Student Ministries director for OSU, a professor in the OSU College of Business, a professor of anatomy at OSU, an emeritus professor from the OSU College of Medicine, and another professor from the OSU College of Business. After confirming the NPO as a good starting point, our context map exercise involved assessing key themes or factors that impact the NPO. From there, we did brainwriting exercises for each prototype, asking stakeholder what strategies or concepts they would employ to address the NPO. The three prototypes involve development in the areas of Christian worldview, mission, and spiritual formation. Our closing activity asked the stakeholders to consider how it might be possible to bring together the three prototypes, or how they might compliment one another.

The assessment I would offer on the success of the workshop on a one-to-five scale is: four. The stakeholders each had distinct but relevant experiences to offer the conversation. Being that the majority of the stakeholders are also part of the target audience for the NPO, Christian professors at OSU, they offered valuable insights about their desires and perspectives. The stakeholders affirmed much of my thinking as being on the right track, while offering some information that helped to fill in gaps that I had not considered. The only weakness of the workshop I can grasp, is that because the stakeholders have never seen or experienced a fruitful resolution to the NPO, their own ability to chart a way forward is limited. Their imagination about how to solve the NPO is not sufficiently cultivated.

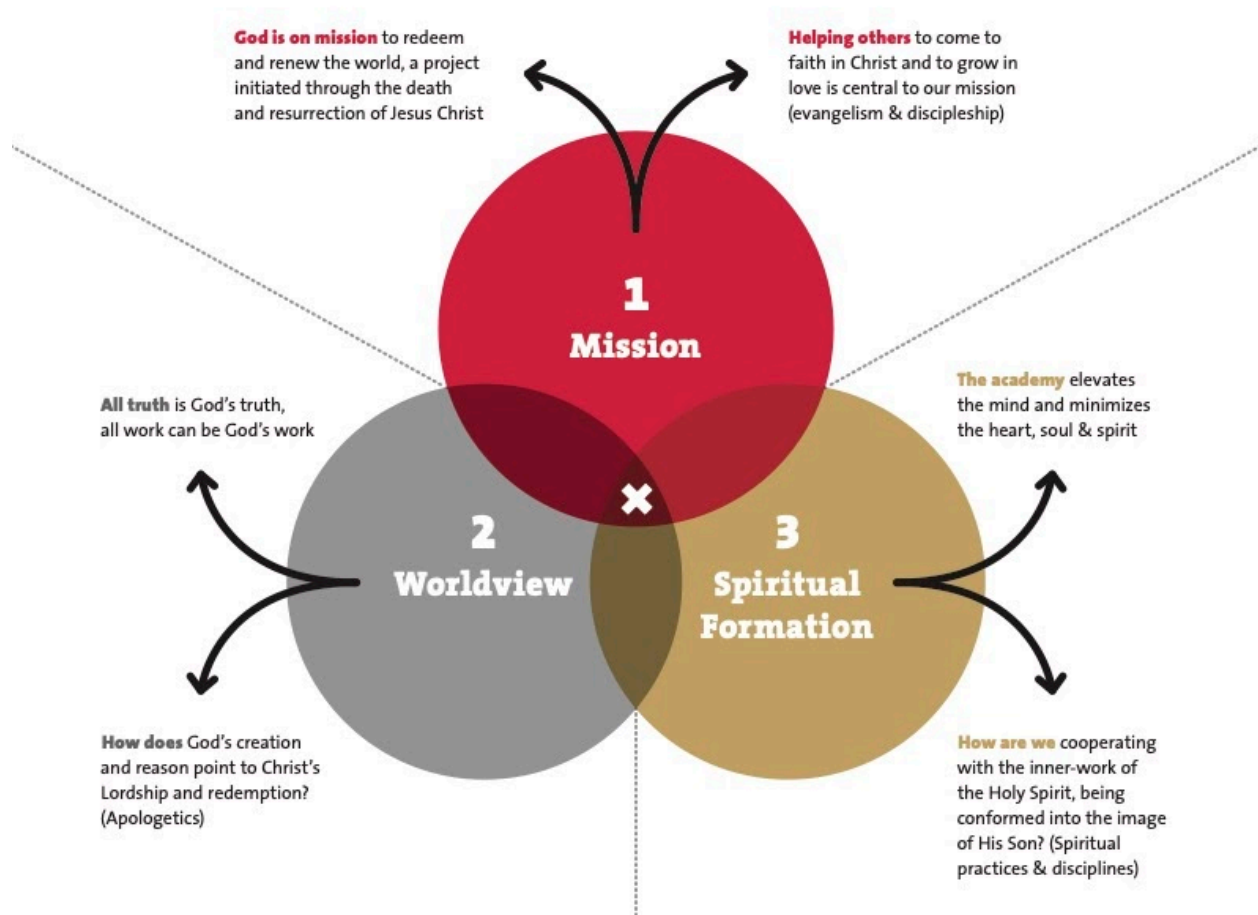
Design Workshop Documentation

11.1.21

Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO)

Considering Christian faculty, we've discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

The Equipped Christian Faculty Member: A Model



Context Map

NPO: *Considering Christian faculty, we've discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.*

What are the key themes or factors that impact this NPO? (For example, are there current societal, generational, technological trends, etc.?)

Stakeholder 1:

Just the idea of the separation of school and faith

Lack of clarity on what is or is not acceptable when sharing faith on campus. In other words, will this activity get me reprimanded or fired?

A lack of examples of faculty that are doing this well.

Stakeholder 2:

Built on assumption that Christian faculty “want” to have missional impact on campus; might not always be the case. Might need to fuel that desire and combat the “compartmentalization” of faith & work - church & state mindset.

Idea of faculty being disconnected - solution isn't necessarily more connection - makes me think of today's technological society and being “connected” without having real relationships in life. Equipping work must encompass a wide range of opportunities for missional impact at a place like OSU - a lot of different opportunities in different ways

Stakeholder 3:

Institutional policies; Scientific evidence related to the discipline; time commitment; lack of continual support; lack of Christian team effort;

Stakeholder 4:

There is a practical issue - Time. Life is full and balancing family, work etc often can leave little time to even think about bringing my spiritual life into work

The nature of academic study is to become an expert in one area. Often the spiritual component of our lives is not valued as significant as the other areas.

Stakeholder 5:

time pressure, competing demands, pressure for academic advancement, sense of walking on egg shells - not knowing the boundaries for faculty to share their faith/personal experience. You discover it when you cross the boundary, where to find training - like Aaron said that churches usually don't address this missional focus or integration of faith into the academic life/work. Immature faith development based on time needed to become an expert in the academy.

Worldview Equipping - Brainwriting

What is one strategy or concept you might employ to help Christian faculty to be better equipped in the area of living out of a Christian Worldview (includes faith & work, and apologetics)? Then, how might you elaborate on or reimagine the idea of the person below you?

Stakeholder 1:

Small group discipleship pods that teach faculty about what we believe and how to live it out with practical tools (i.e. how to share your testimony, how to share the gospel, tips for incorporating faith into the classroom, etc.). Included would be accountability and follow-up on goals coming out of the class

Make the small groups specific to their discipline if possible. Allow the faculty to come up with their own strategies at some point. Kind of assist or come along side with some how tos - but don't try to 'teach' faculty too much. Find great examples of faculty who are already doing this and share a short video or have them come to a larger gathering of pods

-Perhaps a curriculum that is developed that they could go through and apply to their specific field and for their specific purposes.

Stakeholder 2:

Practical application activities - i.e. workshops - that put faculty in different "real-life" situations to discuss how you could respond if you found yourself in those situations.

- Weekly/monthly challenges that allow you to practice those skills in the real world and then report back on them
- After people report back you could see their needs and address with training, and spread the strategies that were successful
- PRAYER

Stakeholder 3:

Online series of workshops that address different needs and topics.

- Workshop topics could include: 1) in-class situations when someone brings up spiritually-related topic...what do you do? 2) one-on-one meetings with students to discuss future professional plans 3) Intentional ways to bring up spiritual topics without forcing them on students, 4) "water-cooler" moments with colleagues

- Online workshops may lack engagement or follow-up unless they are synchronous, so maybe offering the ability for in-person workshops as well
- It would be really cool if we gave a menu of options to bring up bigger picture / spiritual conversations in class so that all christian faculty are challenging students and they start hearing it from multiple faculty

Stakeholder 4:

I can't think of one...but have two ideas working together. I'd need to know the why? Or I'd need to have knowledge about why I should live missionally. I'd need to be convinced from the Scriptures why this is important and worth my time and energy. Second, I'd need an experience to see it working. Such as go on a missions trip. Help mentor or disciple another individual. Share my faith on campus with a co-worker etc. Not just know I should do it, but get out and begin doing it.

I think the why is important and I am trying to understand the experience of seeing it working. Not sure if that means a successful model? Or hand on experiences. It would be helpful to see it done in a group context that will help us learn from each others 'strengths and experiences. These experiences could be built by the knowledge of what the needs are.

Seems to be getting at the notion of stories ("case studies")...learning through examples and experiences of others. Seeing/hearing practical examples from other faculty. I know I've been inspired from others 'examples and have been able to think about how it could apply in my situation (even if it is different

Stakeholder 5:

Focus group of Christian faculty in the same department/field, answering/discussing questions of the intersection of their field, their daily lives and their faith, opportunities for apologetics specifically for their discipline

-I could see this helping faculty gain community and connection. I could see each faculty taking turns sharing or leading each week to build on the ideas that are shared from previous weeks.

I think this would be really helpful especially if there is a way to know who is a Christian within a unit, this could also provide room for mentorship from senior to junior faculty based on experience within a specific area.

Is there one idea that sticks out? Why?

- learning from experience and having examples (case studies)
- group and working together

Spiritual Formation Equipping - Brainwriting

What is one strategy or concept you might employ to help Christian faculty to be better equipped in the area of their Spiritual Formation (includes emotional health, character, and virtue)? Then, how might you elaborate on or reimagine the idea of the person below you?

Stakeholder 1:

I think about concentric circles of community at Ohio State. The innermost could be a small group Bible study that meets on a weekly basis, ready through scripture and talking about life/work challenges. The next circle out could be quarterly Christian faculty get-togethers where speakers train up and encourage the Bible studies. And maybe the largest group is an annual college-wide Christian faculty get together to show us that we are not alone.

Allow for even smaller groups of 2 to 3 especially for those with time constraints, adds some flexibility to meeting, and accountability

One advantage to the different types of meetings (weekly, monthly and quarterly) could be that you could use some meetings to invite new ppl into the group. For example, someone might not be ready for committing weekly but could benefit from hearing a guest speaker.

Stakeholder 2:

Socials a few times each semester - just being around each other socially to know each other.

The socials could include a few people sharing stories on how they have grown and shared their faith effectively on campus

Builds on trusted relationships and creates opportunities for accountability

Stakeholder 3:

Build relationships with other faculty by studying the word of God together and doing life at the academy together.

Bible study that meets once a month so it doesn't feel too overwhelming of a time commitment with everything else going on.

Having events occasionally where family are invited to create more connections

Stakeholder 4:

To have a mentor/disciple. Or maybe a very small group to mentor and encourage one another

This is really helpful and I wonder if there would be room to bring that to a bigger group of people or a wider circle.

Could expand this mentorship model to faculty / students. TTI could leverage its Cru affiliation to make these connections to “pair” Christian students with Christian faculty.

Stakeholder 5:

One-one could be mentor/mentee or mutual relationship. Work through a book together on spiritual formation or spiritual direction. Important to let them choose the person - so it would be authentic, safe space, life-giving. (or have Spiritual Director available to meet with faculty! :)

(I nominate Stakeholder 5 for Spiritual Director) - Stakeholder 2

You could have this for a set period of time. For example, one semester or one year. If faculty enjoy it, they could continue. Some may choose to not continue.

Really like the autonomy in choosing a mentor and working together through a book.

Is there one idea that sticks out? Why?

Relationships and Mentor/Mentee

Varying the timeframes and commitments

Mission Equipping - Brainwriting

What is one strategy or concept you might employ to help Christian faculty to be better equipped in the area of living on Mission (includes evangelism and discipleship)? Then, how might you elaborate on or reimagine the idea of the person below you?

Stakeholder 1:

Create a guideline that is supported by the university that clearly outlines what we can do on-campus and/or create some shelter of protection around sharing our faith (This would be amazing- but wonder if it is better to say, “Don’t ask, don’t tell- kind of flying under the radar???)

Discuss case scenarios related to the above that spell out what is appropriate and why and what is not and why.

I’m not faculty....but it seems like knowing the boundaries of what we can and cannot do is valuable. To respect the university and their policies. And to have job security.

Stakeholder 2:

Teaching about what this means and God's broader mission for us to participate in his ongoing project of Creation. Expand the concept of "missional impact" to encompass more than just "sharing our faith" - i.e. an event.

- Maybe you could leverage a "celebrity" that is doing this well to get across the message (e.g. football coach, etc). Maybe an academic dean rather than a football coach
- Like the idea of expanding the missional impact. Encourage trips with students/ service learning?

Stakeholder 3:

Hands-on experiences. This could be learning from hands on experiences that other faculty might have gone through or being put in situations where we can experience evangelism within the academy.

Consolidate these experiences in a place that collects these stories - not sure if this would be some kind of social media platform (meh) or somewhere else. Something that can be shared beyond an event or getting together face-to-face.

Sharing stories from students or other faculty that were impacted by professors to show people the impact they they are making

Stakeholder 4:

Doing the mission together. If you have community with one another and then engage in the mission together, you deepen your community and see God use you in others lives.

It's good to be able to do this in a group context and be able to develop relationships where people are able to be vulnerable and share challenges and experiences.

Getting people together regularly to discuss the mission and their role in it. Important that these conversations happen more broadly than just small groups or 1:1.

Stakeholder 5:

Practice sharing faith - role play using case scenarios

Intentionally developing relationships with a non Christian in your department with the goal being to share your faith/life as much as appropriate/possible

Hold one another accountable as you seek to build relationships with non Christians in your department. Encourage one another and share ideas of how to build relationships and share Christ with them.

Having the opportunity to do that in a real life setting whether it's at the home institution or travel somewhere to do in a neutral space and learn from mistakes.

Is there one idea that sticks out? Why?

Knowing the guidelines/ethics

What might it look like to live like Jesus is Lord of our academic discipline?

Look at "Lifewise"

Closing Activity

As you think about these 3 areas (Worldview, Formation, Mission) and the strategies that were generated, do you see any ways to bring them together? To work in unison? To compliment one another?

Stakeholder 1:

I think it goes back to Gospel fundamentals. The Gospel informs our worldview, it is the crux of our spiritual formation, and it demands that we live a life on Mission. Emphasizing the fundamentals of the Gospel as something not just for new believers but something for seasoned Christians will result in growth in all three of these areas.

Stakeholder 2:

I see it as important to communicate the three aspects consistently so that any activation (i.e. ideas that are implemented) aren't seen as one-off events. I think it's important as you take this forward that Christian faculty see the overall big picture and understand how the specific activities fit into this. That allows you to reinforce each of the areas continually even if a specific activity or event is focused on one of them. Communicate it continually and consistently. AMEN

Stakeholder 3:

It seems to me that all 3 areas can be grounded in building relationships between faculty and creating the space for them to experience those 3 areas together and learn from others who can help fill the gaps.

Stakeholder 4: (dropped Zoom call)

Stakeholder 5:

It seems to be about developing relationships on different levels, very small groups to larger groups on mission together with a shared world view.

What could be benchmarks for success or improvement look like?

- Stakeholder 3: It really depends on the intervention developed, but establishing pre and post survey for faculty related to readiness. I would also argue that finding a way to capture the impact that this might have on students, would be more important as it is the ultimate goal.
- Stakeholder 2: It shouldn't be about numbers, but level of engagement still is related to how many faculty are at events and doing activities. Not sure if that is the best metric but it's still an indicator; Can use surveys
- Stakeholder 5: Initially it would be hard to have bench marks to demonstrate growth, except for faculty involvement, and their self report - like a before and after survey with a scale. Later after a couple years, you may see an increase in numbers of Christian faculty or programs that are Christ centered and students coming to faith
- Stakeholder 1: It feels a little bit legalistic, but you could have # of times the gospel was shared with students, amount of students that were exposed to spiritual conversations in class, # of baptisms, etc.

One-Page Post-Workshop Message to Stakeholders

Dear Stakeholder,

Thank you again for your time, your interest, and your investment in my research project. I wanted to briefly review with you the fruit of our labor. Below I have sought to provide a synthesis of some key elements of our discussions.

We reviewed the following problem in our ministry context: *Considering Christian faculty, we've discovered Christian faculty are disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact.* In considering how this problem could be resolved we explored how Christian faculty could be developed in the areas of mission, Christian worldview, and spiritual formation. A reoccurring theme we discovered is that for growth to occur, it must happen in community and relationship building with other Christian faculty. In conclusion we discovered that as difficult as it will be to nail down benchmarks for success, interviewing both the faculty that participate in the program, and the students that interact with these faculty about their experiences, will be critical.

Would you kindly let me know if there is something significant that you think ought to be considered related to our discussions? I want to reiterate that your feedback in this research process has been tremendously helpful. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Aaron Badenhop

One-On-One Interviews Documentation

Interview Number One with Pastor

What feedback do you have about my three prototypes?

NPO - The concept is similar to recognizing the Fallen Condition Focus in preparing a sermon.

Could the NPO be framed in a parallel way to the model?

The faculty's lived experience is the problem of disconnection. How can you take advantage of this desire and be aware not to shame faculty for wanting connection?

Thinking about Maslov's hierarchy means connection is a basic need, so don't ignore their desires for community. Even just having a cocktail party can be spiritual formation for individual Christians.

"Smoldering wick" professors need their faith flames fanned. Imagines this would be true for many faculty.

Faculty do face the threat of soft persecution - this is a threat to their stability, and out to be considered as an obstacle in whatever plan is implemented.

People in our culture generally have become suspicious of institutions, and this could be true for Christian faculty that are not sure what affiliating with your institution will mean for them. There could be a hesitancy to fully affiliate, as we assume the worst.

See the Christopher Wright article "Holistic Mission" - Wycliffe Global - Everything that is broken in the fall has to be addressed by the Gospel.

See Anthony Bradley - "Great Commission Christians" vs. "Cosmic Redemption Christians"

That holding a Christian worldview will enhance their work, not detract or distract from it, is a valuable way to frame what you want to see happen.

Need to be aware that we assume too much about how much Christian faculty know about their faith.

We would be calling specialists (in their academic field) to become generalists (to connect their knowledge with a wider-worldview) which can be a big barrier since this would be new to them.

What would it look like to develop faculty to mentor younger faculty?

See "Hideous Strength" in the CS Lewis Sci Fi series, as it is a story that demonstrates the inner ring mentality or seeking to climb the ladder and look down on others.

See John Frame - Tri-Perspectivalism - normative, existential, situational

See Gavin Ortlund - theological retrieval

How might your work have the Sacramental life in view - prayer and lord's supper. Community Life. - see John Frame

Avoid being over-programmed on this, turning it into a technique. Don't become what you're fighting against by being over-programmed.

The shadow side of design thinking is that you could produce a widget. A program can subtly reinforce the human tendency to control and produce outcomes on our own terms. Organic elements in Scripture are not accidental, but integral. Consider the Trivium: is it true, beautiful, good?

Design thinking might unintentionally assume that if I'm smart enough and witty enough I can invent something in a short time frame that overrides thousands of years of design. The patron saint of our culture may be Steve Jobs, but how much of our neurosis come from these "design advancements."

Interview Number Two with Philosopher

What feedback do you have about my three prototypes?

There is a need to be aware of the obstacles: Can faculty actually follow through with the plan.

The project is two-fold: To do what is needed to get the degree. But also, to prepare for a fruitful ministry future.

There is little time. The fact of the matter is faculty have little time. In addition, asking them to get more involved in a Christian ministry venture can invoke fear of loss of time. In his own experience he's been afraid of what campus ministry folks will ask of him.

In his experience the best pathway forward is to be clear that we are not asking for any more than a half a day a week. Faculty need to keep in mind that they can do this in 3-4 hours a week or less before they even know what you're asking of them.

The academy attracts and reinforces those that like the headiness/intellectualism of the ivory tower. This makes fostering emotional intelligence difficult.

He has known campus ministry folk that work with faculty who say all the Christian faculty want is a faculty Bible study.

Fellowship involves a shared mission, but how many want to truly follow Christ on that mission?

Faculty don't usually have any theological training. Sometimes the faculty themselves think they don't need theological training. Sometimes others also falsely assume faculty don't need theological training.

He currently makes his undergrads read "White Fragility" and then write a theological review of the book. This is the kind of exercise any Christian faculty ought to be able to do. It might not take years to help faculty to have at least a better handle on thinking theologically. Doesn't have to take a ton of time, but could at least start. The secret to thinking theologically is being able to ask the right questions. Being "sent" as Cru describes it, ought to be broader than only evangelism and discipleship.

How do you help faculty to help students translate this holistic mission to your place of work?

What we're trying to do is very comprehensive. And the nature of this problem is that you could spend all your time focusing spiritual formation. 2/3 of what they wanted to see happen in the lives of profs at Rivendell had to do with spiritual/character formation.

Maybe if the faculty liked Bible study, could use a book called "practicing the way of Jesus" <https://www.amazon.com/Practicing-Way-Jesus-Together-Kingdom/dp/0830836349>

There are many ways to think about structuring delivery systems. You'll never get to the mission if you leave it last. How could you weave all three together? Perhaps even Cru's historic "10 Basic Steps" could be a delivery system idea. Themes like: Overview. Thinking theologically. Virtues. Mission. etc.

Worldview: Have them write a theology of their academic field.

Head, Heart, Hands as Worldview, Formation, Mission is a good way to view it.

Some faculty think their calling is simply to be a good scholar. So, they assume evangelism and discipleship is the work for others, like pastors.

How does evangelism and discipleship fit into the cultural mandate from Genesis? Is evangelism and discipleship not just part of the work to push back the effects of rebellion from the fall? Where is the cultural mandate in the NT? Perhaps in Ephesians - we are created and saved for good works. The primary way we roll back evil is evangelism and discipleship, but it is just the beginning. Evangelism is a social justice issue. This way of thinking is a way to potentially subvert faculty's objections to mission.

How can you approach head, hands, and heart in a unified way? Maybe don't use the word Worldview? Stay away from crystalized concepts that may be limited or wrong-headed.

Consider framing your prototype around the question of: What does it mean to be a faithful Christian professor? Could there be a name for the model that has a more unifying theme or flavor? Try to overcome compartmentalization. What does it mean to flourish as a professor? What is a truly wise professor?

Interview Number Three with Campus Director

What feedback do you have about my three prototypes?

He likes the model. Are their ways to clarify the language of the model?

Should Worldview and Spiritual Formation be distinct themes? By separating them are you reinforcing the compartmentalization that plagues the faculty and contributes to your NPO?

It seems you want the professor to be spiritually-attuned, missionally-motivated, and (something with mind)

Spiritual formation, instead of being one-third of the model, could encompass the whole of what project. In other words, mission and worldview might be best considered component parts of a holistic spiritual formation model. Maybe the model is best summarized as the formation of a Christian academic.

The time constraint component is real. Faculty (along with most working adults) are very busy.

See "The Patient Ferment of the Early Church" by Kreider. The early church was not in a hurry and patience is okay. Live in the tension that God is on the move now yet growth is messy and takes time. This whole process will take a lot of time.

Appendix D—Milestone 4 Design Research Report

Prototype Summary and Findings

Prototype 1: Mission

PROTOTYPE DESCRIPTION

The “Mission” prototype is a five-minute video of me describing a program designed for Christian faculty in which they would be able to build relationships with other Christian professors while learning together about how they could live missionally in the secular university environment at The Ohio State University. The video suggested how several different books could promote discussion and lead to growth in living on mission. Topics in the prototype included the mission of God, Christian apologetics, a history of the ancient Church on mission, persuasion, and practical advice for Christian professors.

NPO STATEMENT

Considering Christian faculty, we have discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How might the program described in the “Mission” prototype be profitable for Christian faculty, and what obstacles or pitfalls might one face in seeking to implement this program?

ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

I was able to receive feedback after from four different stakeholders (that were included in my IRB form) regarding the viability of such a program.

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION

Three of the different stakeholders are currently professors on campus at The Ohio State University. A fourth is a pastor that has Christian faculty in their local church.

LEARNINGS

Each of the stakeholders emphasized that the potential for the program to bring Christian professors together relationally, to help them to build relationships with others working in the academy, would be a great outcome of the program. It should be noted that the pastor remarked that this program would be able to provide a kind of Christian fellowship for faculty that his local church could not provide for them. What seems to matter most to these participants is that this program could help to build relationships among professors that have similar experiences and values.

The stakeholders also mentioned that they imagine participating in this program would offer them opportunities for personal development and could increase their job satisfaction. They described that this program would help them to feel more empowered and competent to pursue having a Christian influence on campus.

A big challenge for the program will be the delivery method. All four of the stakeholders remarked that they could foresee such a program being short-circuited by inconsistent participation from faculty. Professors are busy and stressed with their work. Faculty have limitations as far as how much they could prepare ahead of time for faculty gatherings, since they already have trouble reading all they need to be reading for their work. There is not a uniform schedule for all faculty at the university, so gathering in person with consistency would have some obstacles.

The most important discovery is that the challenge is less likely to be a lack of will to participate in the program, but a lack of consistent availability among the faculty. The participants remarked that flexibility with the delivery method will be key. They suggested offering gatherings in shorter increments that require less of a time-commitment, suggested offering the program at various times might allow for better engagement, and suggested planning well in advance so that faculty might be more likely to work around the gatherings.

Prototype 2: Formation

PROTOTYPE DESCRIPTION

The “Formation” prototype is also a five-minute video of me describing a program designed for Christian faculty in which they would be able to build relationships with other Christian professors while practicing spiritual disciplines and learning about emotionally healthy spirituality in the secular university environment at The Ohio State University. The video suggested how several different books could provide resources for spiritual growth and maturity. Topics in the prototype included emotional health and neuroscience, virtues in the historic Church, theology’s place in formation, and different prayer practices.

NPO STATEMENT

Considering Christian faculty, we have discovered Christian faculty are typically disconnected and ill-equipped for missional impact at The Ohio State University.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How might the program described in the “Formation” prototype be profitable for Christian faculty, and what obstacles or pitfalls might one face in seeking to implement this program?

ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

I was able to receive feedback after from four different stakeholders (that were included in my IRB form) regarding the viability of such a program.

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION

Three of the different stakeholders are currently professors on campus at The Ohio State University. A fourth is a Cru staff member working with graduate students at OSU.

LEARNINGS

The stakeholders all remarked that the Formation program sounds like it would be profitable. They remarked that the program really should provide opportunities for faculty to grow, to develop, and to learn. Though a value for community was less prominent than in the feedback for the “Mission” prototype, a couple participants did say that they would value the opportunities for discussion with other faculty. One participant imagined that participating in a program like this might better enable them to be able to invest into the lives of their students.

One theme in feedback for the “Formation” prototype that was consistent with the “Mission” prototype was that the professors could foresee having busy and stressful schedules with limited time, both for participating in program itself and for any sort of reading that the program would require. If a professor senses that they are getting behind and not able to keep up then they would be tempted to drop out of the program. One participant commented that it might be a challenge to create a relationally safe atmosphere that could cultivate spiritual growth for the professors, since they are accustomed to having to be guarded with their shortcomings and weaknesses. Based on the feedback of the two prototypes, one might wonder if a focus on spiritual formation in a group setting might sound more emotionally daunting than a focus on mission.

Delivery method would also prove to be a challenge for the “Formation” prototype. The faculty remarked that they would need to see flexible options for involvement. One participant remarked that they would be less likely to make a commitment for the entire academic year, but would like to see offerings in four to six week segments. Another suggested adopting the use of technology like Zoom for gatherings, mirroring how the university is facilitating work meetings for the faculty. This only reinforces a learning from the “Mission” prototype, that the delivery method will require some flexibility. I mentioned in the “Formation” prototype video that I am also working with a “Mission” prototype, and one responder to the “Formation” prototype survey mentioned that they liked the idea of bringing these two prototypes together.

Background Research Essay on the Emerging Solution

Setting: The Age of Destruction

"Welcome to the age of deconstruction."²⁸⁷ The secular university campus is a place where rejecting the Christian faith is in vogue. It is a place "where every cultural impulse celebrates rejecting the Christian past in the name of liberation."²⁸⁸ What human beings long for is truth, goodness, and beauty, yet it is often perceived that Christianity is in the way of these longings finding their fulfillment.²⁸⁹ Christians, at least those that bring their faith with them to the public square, are often understood to be what is wrong with the world.

However, non-Christian voices on campus simultaneously offer no consensus regarding coherent alternatives to the Christian story, as "they would argue a true account of the world cannot be found...we should not even look for any such overarching story."²⁹⁰ In higher education, the "triumph of the therapeutic" means that there is no higher authority to which education must conform; the individual is free make their own meaning.²⁹¹ Since faith is contested in the secular university as much as any other context, whether one is a Christian faculty member or a skeptic, they "live in the space between absolute faith and absolute doubt."²⁹²

The secular academy is also a place that glorifies individual achievement and personal prestige. It is an environment that inculcates academics to find their meaning, self-worth, and identity in their pedigree and accolades. As the modern university elevated the individual as supreme, it has also made work a "form of salvation."²⁹³ Many Christian faculty would resonate with the way one author describes his own achievement-driven life: "I was running on fumes, chasing the dreams of success

287. A. J. Swoboda, *After Doubt: How to Question Your Faith Without Losing It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021) 6.

288. *Ibid.*, 11.

289. Paul M. Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019) 29.

290. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014) 20.

291. Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020) 50.

292. Josh Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018) 23.

293. Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2016) 142.

and security...the mental and emotional exhaustion had about crushed me, and I was starting to resent climbing the ladder. It was costing me my family; it was costing me my soul. Something had to give."²⁹⁴ It can be said that striving for achievement is the numbing behavior²⁹⁵ of choice for academics living in a disenchanted world. For Christian faculty to be adequately equipped to live on mission for Christ at a public university like Ohio State, these crippling realities must be addressed.

Formation and Mission Belong Together

My research has indicated that Christian faculty at Ohio State do not consider themselves to be adequately equipped for missional living on campus. It could be easy to focus on what Christian faculty fail to be doing for God, how they are not active in ministry to others on campus, and then to center a program around training faculty for mission. One could be consumed by teaching professors what they should be doing, but this approach alone would be a grave mistake. It is commonplace for one's Christian commitments to be too shallow. A professor may have Scripture verses framed in every room in their home, and even in their office, but are still likely to have unexamined rituals that reinforce the irrelevance of God to their work, while cultivating the worship of individual success.²⁹⁶

Though the two prototypes I have called "Formation" and "Mission" were explored separately in my research, it is important that they be integrated into a unified program to develop Christian faculty. Professors are very busy people. "Work for God that is not nourished by a deep interior life with God will eventually deteriorate—and us with it."²⁹⁷ Offering training to faculty to do still more for God will not only prove to be overwhelming but will not get down to the roots of what the Spirit wants to change in their souls. Regarding the need for integrating spiritual formation and mission, pastor Rich Villodas eloquently writes: "Our most effective strategy in reaching a world for Christ is grounded in the kind of people we are being formed into. The quality of our presence is our mission."²⁹⁸ A professor's ability to live on mission will only be fruitful while genuinely honoring God

294. Jack Nicholson and Rob Murray, *The Human Operating System: Recovering the Heart and Soul of Your Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Telocity, 2021) 8.

295. James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014) 14.

296. James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016) 126.

297. Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021) 13.

298. Rich Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, First edition (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2020) 172.

insofar as they are “living ever more deeply into God.”²⁹⁹ The Holy Spirit wants to produce fruit in the life of the faculty member that will ultimately display the character of God to those around them.³⁰⁰ However important training for mission will be, it must be accompanied by an emphasis on spiritual formation, a deeper discipleship, that will help professors to minister to others in the manner of Jesus.³⁰¹ As Christians are increasingly antagonized in the secular university, the witness of the early Church in the Roman Empire reminds us that the Christian faith grew and the Church expanded, not because of persuasive evangelism programs, but because early Christians displayed virtues like patience.³⁰²

However, one can fall off the other side of the saddle also. Those who practice the spiritual disciplines can unintentionally maintain an individualistic, inward focus. Philosopher Kyle David Bennet writes that an “emphasis on spiritual growth and intimacy with God is only one part of the whole...for Christians before us, these disciplines were not primarily or exclusively practiced for the intellectual goods that they offer each of us as individuals. They were not really practiced for us at all. Rather, they were practiced for others.”³⁰³ For the Christian professor, a genuine pursuit of a deeply formed life must lead to a life on mission characterized by love of neighbor.

The Place of Thinking Theologically in Formation and Mission

At the beginning of my research, I had explored the significance for faculty of helping them to develop a Christian worldview, of cultivating a distinctly Christian mind. Though historian Mark Noll’s famous treatise on *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*³⁰⁴ still echoes in my psyche, an emphasis on developing a Christian worldview as a distinct and equal emphasis brings unintended consequences. James K.A. Smith asks probing rhetorical questions about Evangelicals’ contemporary approach to spiritual formation: “What if the problem here precisely is the implicit model of the human person we’ve been working with in this whole approach to discipleship? What

299. Craig G. Bartholomew, “Spirituality, Mission, and the Drama of Scripture,” in *Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church*, ed. Nathan A. Finn and Keith S. Whitfield (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017) 53.

300. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit: Growing in Christlikeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017) 22.

301. Dallas Willard, *The Allure of Gentleness: Defending the Faith in the Manner of Jesus*, First edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2015) 2.

302. Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016) 17.

303. Kyle David Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017) 13.

304. Mark A Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

if Descartes was wrong and we've been hoodwinked into seeing ourselves as thinking things? What if we aren't first and foremost 'thinkers'? Then the problem isn't just our individual resolve or our lack of knowledge, the problem is precisely our thinking-thingism."³⁰⁵ Smith argues that our reason is inherently connected to our longings and our habits that cultivate what we love. Knowing the right answers intellectually does not mean that Christian professors actually believe them, as displayed in how they live their lives.³⁰⁶ Therefore, thinking theologically is best situated as a component, even if an essential ingredient, to spiritual formation which leads to a life on mission.

It is not a matter of whether we are being formed, it is a matter of what, or who, is forming us. A Christian is one that seeks to be formed, ultimately, by God. The use of one's mind to ascertain God's revelation of reality in Scripture is an essential component to growing in Christlikeness. "God assists the understanding of those who are virtuous, helping them to see that all things exist in relation to himself."³⁰⁷ Mulholland, in conversation with John Wesley, suggests that using the mind to engage with Christian Scripture must start with a heart's desire to know God's will and to be obedient.³⁰⁸ The mind and heart must work together in cooperating with the Holy Spirit's work in our formation. In the post-Enlightenment West, Christians have accepted the notion that faith is something separate from the realm of truth and knowledge, leading to disastrous effects.³⁰⁹ In light of this, Clark and Johnson argue that Christian theology does play an essential role in Spiritual formation: "Christians are called to the renewal and transformation of our minds in Christ Jesus in such a way that we are shaped to understand reality as it is determined by God. We believe that theology has a necessary part to play in that glorious reconfiguration."³¹⁰

Thinking theologically, and particularly narrative theology, is also an essential ingredient to living on mission. Christian professors must be able to locate their work in their academic discipline within the Christian story. "Surely, the rediscovery of God's narrative and its implications for ministry are the most pressing spiritual issues facing the church at the beginning of the twenty-first century."³¹¹

305. Smith, *Love*, 5.

306. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002) 88.

307. Christopher R. J. Holmes, *A Theology of the Christian Life: Imitating and Participating in God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021) 13.

308. M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993) 113.

309. Dallas Willard, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge*, 1st ed (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009) 24.

310. John C. Clark and Marcus Peter Johnson, *A Call to Christian Formation: How Theology Makes Sense of Our World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021) 18.

311. Robert E. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World? Contending for the Christian Story in an Age of Rivals* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008) 20.

A worldview is less a set of philosophical or theological bullet points, and it is more a master narrative that is second nature to us.³¹² And to live on mission, the professor must go beyond the ability to think Christianly about their academic discipline, they must be able to use this knowledge to become persuasive to others on campus in a way that impacts people's lives in accordance with God's story.³¹³ The development of the mind of the Christian professor is best understood as part of the spiritual formation process that leads to life on mission.

The Place of Relationships in Formation and Mission

One of the themes that has emerged in engaging with Christian faculty through my research is their need for community. The need for relationships is intuitive to the faculty, but this need is likely more significant than they realize. Neuroscience research shows the significance of healthy relational attachments. "Jesus intends His church to function as a family that is bonded together with joyful attachments of love. Like a baby with her two smiling parents, our churches can create environments for developing our joyful identities as children of God."³¹⁴ This need for joyful attachments is no less true for Christian faculty in the public university, where relationships with colleagues tend to be characterized more by competition and comparison than love and authenticity.

Christian psychiatrist Curt Thompson writes about something he calls "confessional communities."³¹⁵ These are groups where people are given space to reflect upon and to verbalize their feelings, and to tell their stories authentically in safety. Thompson writes that these kinds of communities are an important dynamic to spiritual formation, as they help the believer to awaken to their "soul's condition, to help his mind become transformed, to support his sanctification."³¹⁶ Evidence shows that one's experience of secure, mature relationships make one more likely to likewise experience God as "loving and benevolent."³¹⁷ The development of Christian faculty must emphasize deep and supportive relationships among professors.

312. Keller and Leary Alsdorf, *Every*, 157.

313. Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer, *Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017) 91.

314. Michel Hendricks and Jim Wilder, *The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2020) 83-84.

315. Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Desire: Discovering the Neuroscience of Longing, Beauty, and Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2021) 91.

316. *Ibid.*, 94.

317. Todd W. Hall and M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, *Relational Spirituality: A Psychological-Theological Paradigm for Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021) 126.

MVP (Most Viable Prototype)

Considering all the above, the most viable prototype is an integration of the “Formation” and “Mission” prototypes. This integrated program might be called “The Deeply Formed, Missional Professor.” The idea of this program would be to organize times and spaces for Christian faculty to connect with one another relationally, to practice spiritual exercises together, to be stretched in their thinking theologically, and to train them practically in ministering to others on campus. On the one hand, this prototype would not simply be a book or curriculum, as there must be an emphasis beyond information and on getting faculty together to build relationships, to create space in their busy schedules for them to experience God more deeply. On the other hand, this program must be more than a prayer meeting, as these professors will need to engage their minds with matters of Christian theology and philosophy; they must receive hands-on training regarding how to take advantage for their role and to use their voice to impact others on campus for Christ.

A challenge for this prototype, recognized throughout this research process, will be scheduling times for this program considering professors’ busy yet incongruent schedules. The program will require flexibility in planning, perhaps allowing for multiple groups meeting at different times, or for different ways to engage. Facilitating this program will require me to organize faculty gatherings with consideration of cultivating relationships, creating space to encounter God, to think deeply, and to provide practical and tangible training. It will also require the ability to adapt on the fly as we discover what professors are most interested to participate along with their availability.

Appendices

Prototype 1: Mission

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/mQCUFMMms7c>

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

How might this program be useful or helpful to you?

4 responses

- Being connected with like-minded colleagues who face similar challenges in the workplace would be invaluable. It would inspire me to keep a missional focus and renew my vision for my work. It would increase my job satisfaction and overall joy.
- As a pastor who has many professors in my congregation, this program would encourage members at Hope Presbyterian to connect what they are learning on Sunday to what they are doing every other day of the week. Additionally, this prototype serves our faculty congregants in ways that our church simply cannot. Cru has a "reach" and an "agility" on campus that we do not. Also, this prototype is more naturally embedded into the life of campus.
- This program will be useful in connecting me with believers in the same vocation. It will serve as an avenue for encouragement from fellow Christians by learning from their testimonies and/or through developing new relationships (in a manner that "iron sharpens iron"). It can also serve as a place of empowerment where I can learn from friends and discussions about how to shine as a light and better represent Christ in a vocation and workplace where He is being actively rejected.
- Good fellowship and professional development with other Christian professors. Good evolution of personal ministry. Reinforces the Great Commission.

What potential pitfalls or barriers do you see related to this program?

4 responses

- People not having time to read the books. (Our work already requires us to read a lot of material.) The scheduling of the time and place to meet with other faculty. Inconsistent attendance may make it difficult to form relationships of any depth.
- Sometimes meet-ups like this can lose momentum fast. There must be a large buy-in and commitment on the front end for this to maintain it's momentum and fulfill it's purpose. I could see a busy professor backing out last minute because of a busy week. And this could be discouraging to others.
- The business of faculty is the number one barrier or pitfall for the program. Inconsistency of and low attendance could also be problematic. Schedule planning should help overcome these issues. Allowing some flexibility (perhaps having multiple - two or three - sessions per lesson/discussion) in the schedule, facilitating convenience (having meetings very close to work hours and close to the workplace), and making the schedule

manageable (shorter meeting times with manageable home for each meeting time) are some of the approaches that come to mind about handling the aforementioned challenges.

- Professors are sometimes busy. Making the sessions virtual or over Zoom like so many formal faculty meetings are now, would facilitate attendance and scheduling options (rather than requiring participants travel to a location).

How likely are you to make time to participate in a program like this, and why?

4 responses

- I would enjoy meeting with fellow professors but perhaps not reading all the books. I would enjoy discussing quotes from the books or a summary. I would make it a priority to meet with other faculty if the discussion was focussed. If few are able to read the books, the discussion may flounder.
- I would be honored to participate in a program like this. While I am not a professor, I am a pastor with a heart for academia. And would - if appropriate - gladly participate in any way.
- I am likely to participate. I will like to get connected with other faculty believers on campus and exchange experiences with them about living life as a Christian in academia.
- Depends on how often scheduled and if they sessions are booked far in advance. Overall, I think it is a good idea.

Prototype 2: Formation

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/yprgS44Mvow>

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

How might this program be useful or helpful to you?

4 responses

- I think it would be great to be able to read and discuss the topics on these books. This will certainly help me grow as a Christian and equip with knowledge that I can share and implement in my capacity as a faculty whenever I interact with my students.
- Reading great books on spiritual practices is always exciting to me. Discussing them with other faculty could be really beneficial in helping me delve deeper in areas that I may not know much about.
- The program presents an opportunity to be develop or strengthen our Christian foundation in a range of topics.
- This is _____. I could see this being helpful in giving a community where iron can sharpen iron. I know professors would probably enjoy having a place where they could gather and talk about their faith and how they can grow in Christ in their common context of OSU. Creating an atmosphere that is safe and where ppl can be vulnerable could be a challenge. I would imagine professors are probably not the most vulnerable ppl. They

are often expected to have all the answers and not show weaknesses or deficiencies. This will be a obstacle to try to overcome.

What potential pitfalls or barriers do you see related to this program?

4 responses

- Someone like me might find it difficult to keep up with the book readings and hence end up falling behind and eventually drop out.
- My long commute is the major barrier to meeting in person. The sometimes overwhelming number of responsibilities related to my faculty position can make carving out time to consistently participate a challenge.
- The time to meet consistently and commit to the reading (audio books might be helpful). Meeting in person might also be a challenge (virtual meetings are becoming more common).
- I like the idea of having a formation component and a missional component. One challenge will be that not everyone would be in the same spot. So some may be more advanced and some much younger in their faith. You could supplement this by having one on one discipleship to make sure you fill in any holes in doctrine, etc so that they will grow to be complete in Christ.

How likely are you to make time to participate in a program like this, and why?

4 responses

- Very likely. I think the more I invest in my own spiritual growth, the better I am able to pour into my students. This will also help me in my relationship with God as I walk through this with other faculty.
- I am much more likely to participate in a program that is run intermittently (such as in two or three 4-6 week segments throughout the year) than something throughout the entire academic year. This is because my teaching load, research and administrative responsibilities tend to be cyclical. I have more time in spring semester, but very limited time to participate in fall semester. A defined commitment of 4-6 weeks is manageable and can be planned for.
- It depends on the semester. Spring semester might be more of a challenge but the other semesters might be more feasible. It is likely that I would participate.
- I was thinking of doing a "book" club with grad students. Some are reading books on the side...christian and non christian books. so I'm sure some would want to pick up the book and. may enjoy joining professors. If you'd want to keep it elusively to professors, I'd understand that too. But I think I'd enjoy reading the book and coming to the conversations.

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