

not professors who happen to be Christians. And as called men and women, God invites us to critical roles in His grander story to bring hope to the world.

So now, with this important issue of “being” given proper place, how does the greatness of Christ shape our grander “doing”? In other words, how does the greatness of Christ shape our academic pursuits? This is the vast topic of chapter 4, Grander Doing.

Reflecting on the Grander Story

1. How does knowing Jesus heal us from both shame and narcissism?
2. When was the last time you rejoiced over another colleague’s accomplishments? What was that like? Why do the successes of others not diminish our own success?
3. Os Guinness writes, “Unsure of ourselves, we are sure of God.” In what areas of your life do you feel most unsure of yourself? How does being “sure of God” help you?
4. Consider again Litfin’s words about our primary motivation for academic work being intrinsic and not extrinsic. What are your thoughts and feelings related to Litfin’s quote (pages 40–41)?
5. Explain the difference between being a professor who happens to be a Christian and a Christian who happens to be a professor.

Notes

1. Heather Holleman, *Seated with Christ: Living Freely in a Culture of Comparison* (Chicago: Moody, 2015).
2. Silvan Tompkins, in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tompkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 148.
3. Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 25.
4. We highly recommend this short pamphlet. Read it and discuss it with friends.
5. Tim Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness: The Path to True Christian Joy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 31.
6. Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance: Seeing Your True Worth through God’s Eyes*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003); and Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).
7. Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 1:138.
8. Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 58–59.

4

Grander Doing



I chose you and appointed you so that you may go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.

—Jesus in John 15:16 (NIV)

In the previous chapter, Heather shared a day in her journey, one that reminds us of the hope and freedom that becomes ours as we anchor our identity in Christ. Determining who we are—those who find our identity in Christ and follow Him—will always provide the foundation for how we live out our distinctive Christian calling in the university and the world. We are Christians called by God to be professors.

This chapter humbly addresses the subsequent question “As Christ-following faculty, what shall *we do*?” Traditional research universities delineate faculty responsibilities as *research*, *teaching*, and *service*. Since this book desires to address faculty at both teaching universities and community colleges, for the purposes of this chapter, we will tweak the traditional three-legged stool of faculty responsibilities to be (1) *academic pursuits* (research/teaching in discipline), (2) *relationships* (with students/colleagues), and (3) *service* (in the university/world). The vast majority of this chapter addresses (1) *academic pursuits*. We truncated (2) *relationships* and (3) *service* not on principle but because these receive much fuller explanation in the stories found in chapters 5–10 than the topic of academic pursuits.

When I (Heather) first began to wrestle with the question “What does a Christian professor *do*?” I discovered that my radical independence, self-importance, and stubborn reliance on my skills and intellect collided with what I was learning in my Bible about “the Spirit-filled life.”

In the student union of the University of Michigan, in between contributing to my Critical Theory seminars, writing a painstaking dissertation proposal, researching the psychology of emotion, and teaching discussion sections on Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, I sat with my Bible open. I pondered three passages of scripture that slowly began to shape everything about what I would pursue in my academic work and, more importantly, how I would pursue it, both in finishing my graduate work and then as an instructor in an English department.

In John 15:5 (NIV), we read this concept of "bearing fruit." Jesus claims: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." And later in verse 16 (NIV), there is this statement from Jesus: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last." I considered, for the first time, what it meant to abide or remain with Christ to "bear fruit." What was this fruit? How do professors "bear fruit"? I was so eager to learn about the fruit of good character, of gospel proclamation, and of research and teaching that could come from God, that God might use to bless the world.

Second, I read Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), where Paul claims, "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared in advance for us to do." God created me, as an academic, to do good works that He had prepared. I felt a new peace and ease, like a burden was lifted, as I pondered this concept of God going ahead of me, preparing the good works of my life, including my academic work.

When I think of what I "do" as a Christian professor, the first thing that comes to mind is that I abide in Him.

Finally, I confronted Paul's statement in Galatians 2:20 (NIV): "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

These three verses helped me understand that God was bearing fruit through my life—fruit He ordained—and that Jesus was living His resurrected life through me to bear this fruit. So, oddly, when I think of what I "do" as a Christian professor, the first thing that comes to mind is that I abide in Him and trust Him to bear much fruit in me, to see Him use me as His instrument to do His work.

But what is this fruit as an academic? What would characterize it? I am still learning about this. What I knew, first and foremost, was that whatever this fruit was, it would begin and end with Jesus's power operating within me to produce the good works He has already prepared for me. The profound

freedom of attaching to these biblical truths set me free to enjoy Jesus and discover these works rather than laboring—with all my self-effort, anxiety, comparison to others, and desperation—to make a name for myself. Some of the early fruit in my life was surprisingly more about my mind-set than any outward performance; I began to discover God cultivating within me a growing sense of curiosity, humility, and wonder, or worship.

Scholars everywhere seem to possess an unbridled inquisitiveness about the ways of the world, yet I (Rick) wonder if Christian faith spawns a unique curiosity in those who believe. For example, note King David's curiosity, piqued by observations he made concerning the world around him: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps. 8:3–4). Elsewhere in the psalter, after noting the wonder of the sun and moon, mountains and rock badgers, he erupts, "O, Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all" (Ps. 104:24). As one becomes enamored of the majesty of God and His creation, this attention to Him brings forth the fruit of reverent curiosity. For one organic chemist, chemistry was an invitation to uncover a part of God's creation not yet revealed. This researcher mused that perhaps God had even withheld the discovery of this part of creation until now, so he woke up eager and full of worship, expectant to learn more about God's creation that day in the lab.

In a similar vein, the greatness of God and His creation also produces the fruit of humility, something certainly not natural to us or the academic world. The Apostle Paul wrote that humility finds its place alongside compassion and kindness as the mark of those who know God: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" (Col. 3:12). Stephen Charnock (1628–80) offered this insightful reflection on how humility grows as a fruit of knowing God:

In the consideration of this excellent attribute [God's knowledge], what low thoughts should we have of our own knowledge, and how humble ought we to be before God! . . . [As] our beings are nothing in regard to the infiniteness of his essence, so our knowledge is nothing in regard of the vastness of his understanding. We have a spark of being, but nothing to the heat of the sun; we have a drop of knowledge, but nothing to the Divine ocean. What a vain thing is it for a shallow brook to boast of its streams before a sea, whose depths are unfathomable! As

it is a vanity to brag of our strength, when we remember the power of God, and, of our prudence, when we glance upon the wisdom of God, so it is no less a vanity to boast of our knowledge, when we think of the understanding and knowledge of God. How hard is it for us to know anything! Too much noise deafens us, and too much light dazzles us; too much distance alienates the object from us, and too much nearness bars up our sight from beholding it.¹

Humility is the natural by-product of recognizing our place in relation to the One who precedes all things, made all things, and sustains all things and who Himself is the goal of all things. I (Heather) continue to struggle, and grow, in this area and have begun to wonder if a lack of humility indicates where I'm failing to appreciate the grander story and the Grand One.

In pursuit of what God has made, eventually I've found myself drawn to the God who has made it. Litfin comments:

Christian scholars view their work as larger than themselves, larger than itself. They look not only at what they're studying but also along it, so as to see its Christ-centered implications. This tethering of the temporal to the eternal provides meaning and significance and beauty to what they do and generates the highest motivation for excellence. Their study becomes virtually an act of worship. They work not merely to understand the created order, as worthwhile as that goal is within itself; they also study the created order to deepen their understanding and appreciation of, and ultimately their relationship with, the One who fashioned it and who occupies its center, its Creative Orderer, the Lord Jesus Christ.²

At the end of the day, when I think of what I "do" as a professor, I first think, "I abide and then bear fruit." The first characteristic of this fruit is the new mind-set of curiosity, humility, and worship as I ponder the wonders of a world created, and sustained, by none other than Jesus Christ!

Academic Pursuits

Given the vast nature of the issues involved, this chapter can do little more than serve as a conversation starter, but we have tried to provide helpful resources for further study in the endnotes. The question at hand is this: "How does a Christian professor lean into his or her academic pursuits?"

Pursue Academics as unto Christ

God calls all believers to do their work wholeheartedly, as unto Christ: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23–24). We should pursue our academics "not for men" but for Christ.

D. A. Carson notes the common temptation for Christian academics to allow scholastic pursuits to be shaped by the "seduction of applause"³ instead of by the motivation to be faithful to Jesus Christ. He believes this applause comes from two main directions: "First, it can come from an academic direction . . . The respect of peers who write erudite journal articles becomes more immediately pressing than the Lord's approval."⁴ Carson observes that if it becomes more important for a Christian scholar to be published by a certain press than to honor God with his or her academic work, then this scholar is in "grave danger."⁵ But Carson also sees the "seduction of applause" as potentially coming from a completely different direction, that of the "constituency of your friends, a narrower peer group but one that, for some people, is equally ensnaring. Scholarship is then for sale: you constantly work on things to bolster the self-identity of your group, to show it is right, to answer all who disagree with it."⁶ Carson reminds all Christian academics of their primary motivation and allegiance in their academic pursuits: "On the last day, we stand or fall on the approval of one person, one master, the Lord Jesus."⁷

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—D. A. Carson

Strive for Excellence

In his insightful book *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue*, Andreas Köstenberger, senior research professor of biblical studies and chair of the doctoral studies program, begins with God—"God is excellent in everything he is and does"⁸—and makes the case that as a result, academics who belong to God should necessarily reflect God by pursuing excellence in all that they do, including their academics. This pursuit of excellence is not rooted in the applause of people, nor chiefly for the sake of a CV, but in a desire to reflect the excellencies of God in our studies, relationships, and all of life. If God is excellent, and we abide in Him (John 15:5), and He bears

fruit through us, then it makes sense that we would pursue excellence in our academics. However, this doesn't mean that we pursue excellence in the same way, or for the same ends, as others in the academy who don't belong to Christ.

A Faculty Commons colleague told me of visiting an adjunct at a nearby university. This professor pointed to a mat on the floor of his office, right next to his desk. He commented that he often slept here, on the floor of his office, so that he could push ahead of others in his pursuit of chemistry. Christ-following professors should strive to excel, not chiefly for the accolades of those around them or to "push ahead of others," but to follow and serve Christ. He is our leader, and as we considered in our last chapter, He is worthy to be followed. We share much in common in our journey with peers who do not know Christ, yet our motivations to excel in this journey are vastly different.

We clearly need excellent, first-rate Christian scholars. As Nathan Hatch, president of Wake Forest University and leading scholar of issues related to the US history of religion, comments, "The battle for the mind cannot be waged by mobilizing in the streets or on Capitol Hill, nor by denouncing more furiously the secular humanists. If we are to help preserve even the possibility of Christian thinking for our children and grandchildren, we must begin to nurture first-order Christian scholarship."⁹ While it is exceptionally rare that any particular Christian scholar makes such a unique contribution to shape a discipline, *all* Christ-following professors should strive to excel, not chiefly for the accolades of those around them, or for the hope of being the star in an academic field, but out of a simple desire to follow Christ and to reflect Him in their work.

As I strove for excellence in my field, I (Heather) learned to appreciate stewardship of my gift. I also considered the difference between stewardship of my gift as a researcher and teacher and the foolishness of overworking. In graduate school, a Cru staff member challenged me one semester to offer a "tithing of time" to the Lord because I spent every waking moment reading, writing, and preparing lesson plans. But what would it look like to implement a weekly Sabbath and give time to the Lord for a Friday Bible study and discipleship group? At that time, I devoted, at most, ten hours of my week to Cru activities (Friday night meeting, Bible study, discipleship, and evangelism), and it was an enormous step of faith to sacrifice this time. I decided to work diligently for no more than eight hours a day in order to make time for relationships (I met my husband!) and church service (I served in the youth group). That semester, I called the Cru leaders and left a hyper, joyful message on their answering

machine that they joked about for years to come: On the semester that I "tithed time" I not only received top grades, but I placed a paper for conference presentation, sent out articles, won a teaching award, and was thriving spiritually and relationally. Working "wholeheartedly, as unto to the Lord" never meant an unbalanced, foolish life in which I work all day long.

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Make a Unique Christian Contribution

How do Christian scholars contribute in a pluralistic university? How one answers this question depends largely on one's position on the multifaceted, challenging question of how God has called His church to engage culture. In his book *Center Church*, Tim Keller provides an immensely helpful overview of various positions the church has taken on this pivotal issue.¹⁰ One position he labels "transformationists," a term he uses for those who desire to engage with culture to change it. He uses the designation "relevance model," for groups who see "Christianity as being fundamentally compatible with the surrounding culture." His third model is labeled the "counterculturalist" model: "I've given it this name because those within this model place their emphasis on the church as a *contrast society* to the world. And while other models of cultural engagement speak about the important concept of the kingdom of God, this model strongly emphasizes that the kingdom is manifest primarily as a church community in opposition to the kingdom of this world. . . . Those operating in this model do not see God working redemptively through cultural movements outside the church."¹¹ And for his fourth and final category, he opts for the term "the two kingdoms model." This group is more complex but in essence includes those who see God's rule over the earth in two distinct arenas: a common kingdom (which everyone, including the academy, participates in) and a redemptive kingdom (the church). In the end, Keller sees strengths and weaknesses in each model, from which he garnered "blended insights" to suggest a wise and winsome strategy for how Christians engage culture around them. We commend his work as an excellent resource on this topic, though we can't explore the specifics here. Our position would be much like Keller's proposed "blended insights," where Christians avoid withdrawing from culture or seeking to take over culture, one where they seek to be a unique Christian voice and seek the good of the community around them.

At the end of the day, the American university is an immensely strategic institution, one that shapes our country and the world in nearly unimaginable ways. If a distinctly Christian voice is missing from the university, the loss is immeasurable not only for each student in these classrooms but also for each academic discussion that transpires across campus and for our country and world, which are shaped by the dictums and culture flowing out of these institutions.

Professor George Marsden's "The State of Evangelical Scholarship" outlines a wise path for Christian academics:

For us as scholars this means that our agenda ought to be directed toward building for our community as solid a place in the pluralistic intellectual life of our civilization as is consistent with our principles. Helping to establish the intellectual viability of our world view and pointing out the shortcomings of alternatives can be an important service to our community and an important dimension of our witness to the world. To perform this task properly requires a delicate combination of modesty and assertiveness. Our intellectual life must display the Christian qualities of self-criticism and generosity to others. Richard Neuhaus puts it well when he says we should have "reverence for those with whom we disagree." At the same time, we properly attempt to establish for others the attractiveness of our world view.¹²

We commend this approach, particularly the call to establish the viability of our own worldview while demonstrating generosity and respect toward those with whom we disagree.

More recently, distinguished professor of law and religion John Inazu has suggested that Christians seek a posture of "confident pluralism":

The intuition for a confident pluralism flows out of what John Rawls famously called "the fact of pluralism"—the recognition that we live in a society of "a plurality of conflicting, and indeed incommensurable, conceptions of the meaning, value and purpose of human life." The fact of pluralism creates a political and social question of whether and how we can live with these deep differences. A confident pluralism maintains that we can do so; in fact, we must embrace a "right to differ" from state and majoritarian norms. It is not an *aggressive* pluralism that knows no boundaries, but a *confident* pluralism rooted

in the conviction that protecting the integrity of one's own beliefs and normative commitments does not depend on coercively silencing opposing views.¹³

Both Inazu and Marsden reject any form of triumphalism, seeking rather to find a place for Christian perspectives within a pluralistic university.

Nathan Hatch, however, warns of a common temptation, one inevitable for Christians in a minority position within the academy:

Like children long rejected, evangelical scholars are still too anxious to be accepted by their peers, too willing to move only in directions that allow them to be "relevant." [The result is that] "we have been far more inclined to speak up when our Christian convictions are in tune with the assumptions of modern academic life than when they are at odds. It is much easier, for instance, to set oneself in the vanguard of social progress than it is to defend those Christian assumptions that the established and fashionable intellectual circles of our day regard as obscurantist and fanciful. Yet it is this tougher mental fight that we must not avoid."¹⁴

To avoid the temptation to value social acceptance over defending the Christian worldview requires us to embrace a "[tough] mental fight." In an effort to bring a distinctive Christian perspective into a pluralistic university, we present some questions one might ponder when considering future research or teaching opportunities. The following categories and questions have helped me (Heather) and other future faculty consider possible areas of study.

Engage the Metanarrative of Your Discipline

What is the metanarrative of my discipline? Does this bring to light possible issues that need to be refuted, modified, or advanced? Each discipline has its own narrative with foundational principles, methodology, and even data.¹⁵ It is important that Christian scholars think deeply about these. What are the specifics of this narrative? Professor of theology and culture Bruce Ashford recently shared with me (Rick) that he always recommends that his PhD students examine the history of their particular discipline. In doing this, we learn a great deal about its presuppositions. Then, once the foundation is

understood, we can compare and contrast the deeply held core beliefs of a discipline with the Bible story line. Where do we find agreement? Tensions? Contradictions? Opportunities?

One of my (Rick's) friends helps professionals do a similar exercise in their own occupations. Recently, he shared with me about a group of lawyers who met early one morning a week to think through what it meant to be a Christian in the law profession. He asked them a series of questions to help them uncover the foundational principles, methodology, and even the "end" of their daily work as lawyers. Week after week, over breakfast, they kept drilling deeper until they arrived at a series of statements that were universally embraced by the group as summarizing the true narrative of their occupation. Then, with this in hand, together they began to compare and contrast these values with the Bible's story line. The roots of God's creational design were evident immediately in some core values, such as "justice," yet at the same time, there was great distortion in others, such as "win at all costs."

Making a similar observation, professor of religion and theology Craig Bartholomew and professor of worldview and religious studies Michael Goheen write, "On the one hand, since God is faithful to his creation, much true insight into God's world will come to us from the non-Christian academic community; on the other hand, the idolatry that underlies Western scholarship will be at work to distort that insight. The task of the Christian scholar is to embrace and to celebrate true insights into the world from whatever source they come, but also to uncover the idolatry that has twisted them."¹⁶ In our quest to understand the history of our discipline and its foundations, we should expect to find things that resonate with God's creative purposes as well as gross distortions due to sin and idolatry. Both may produce possible writing topics.

Engage the Metanarrative of Our Culture

What is the current metanarrative of our culture? What needs to be encouraged, corrected, or redirected for the common good? As we become more astute about the world around us, often opportunities will present themselves, but we sadly tend to be so immersed in our culture that we fail to recognize the shaping thoughts of the day. Bartholomew and Goheen's book *Living at the Crossroads* is built around the concept that we live at the crossroads of God's story and (for those of us in the United States) the story of Western culture: "The story that has shaped Western culture for several centuries is a narrative

of progress that says we are moving toward ever-greater freedom and material prosperity, and that we are doing so by human effort alone, especially through science embodied in technology, and in the application of scientific principles to our social life, in economics, in politics, and in education."¹⁷ Clearly, the story shaping Western culture is in tension with God's grander story in significant ways (see "Pursue Gospel Conversations" below).

Seek Opportunities to Bless the World

Are there opportunities to pursue a project or research that might be a blessing to the world? One possible way to bless the world is by addressing tangible needs—fresh water, shelter, food, community infrastructure, health care, and safety—but another would be the intangible work of ideas that enable new ways of living. In chapter 7, you'll read of Dr. Bradley's decision as a materials scientist to study the properties of coconut husks with the hope that breakthroughs in this area could be a huge blessing to the eleven million poor coconut farmers in the world. He even secured funding from the National Science Foundation and Ford Motor Company for this research.

Pursue Gospel Conversations

Is there a contemporary position that is in conflict with the gospel that needs to be responded to? Are there research or writing areas that might open doors to engage in gospel/Christian worldview conversations? Philosopher J. P. Moreland's *Kingdom Triangle* discusses the worldview of scientific naturalism, which he describes as consisting of three elements: "1. A theory of the nature and limits of knowledge, 2. . . . a creation story about how everything came into existence, [and] 3. a physicalist view of reality, according to which everything that exists is either physical or else it depends necessarily on the physical for its emergence and continued existence."¹⁸ Naturalism's stranglehold on today's society and academy deeply impacts how the gospel is received: "If two scientific theories are competing for allegiance, then most intellectuals, at least in principle, should be open to all evidence relevant to the issue. But what happens if one or two rival theories is considered scientific and the other is not?"¹⁹ In this case, of course, in light of the rules of knowledge established by naturalism, the "nonscientific" theory fails to receive a fair hearing, and the viability of the gospel is eroded: "The scientific epistemology of naturalism is pervasive in the university, the public schools, and

the media. As a result, other forms of knowledge are regarded by the average citizen as either nonexistent or vastly inferior to science. This not only gives science incredible authority to define reality for all of us, it also causes believers to wonder if science has in some way discredited their Christian beliefs.”²⁰

Obviously, 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. Almost a decade ago, I (Heather) realized how many rhetoric and composition classrooms followed a shame-based teaching model where the professor sat as a highly authoritative, controlling presence. This kind of professor mostly taught from negative examples and criticized more than he or she praised. This kind of professor would value argument, debate, sarcasm, and cynicism instead of finding common ground, persuasion, encouragement, and joyful speech. As I studied shame and pedagogy, I researched what a college classroom might look like with a highly communal, decentered professor who mostly encouraged, mostly taught from positive examples, and valued connection more than evaluation of work. I attempted to create an atmosphere of vulnerability and trust because I believed writing instruction worked best when the fear of shame was removed. Over the years, I focused on strategies of rapport building and the role of celebration, laughter, and failure in a writing classroom. Students not only succeeded, but my department head asked me to design curriculum and lead graduate pedagogy seminars. As I train future faculty, I’m often asked to explain my pedagogy. I’m able to talk about teaching as a “sacred vocation” and how, just as God responds to us with grace and mercy, we need to have the same attitude in our teaching. Like Ken Elzinga’s teaching philosophy (chapter 5), I explain that I embrace servanthood and love because of Jesus’s model.

Follow God’s Leading

Is there a substantive area in your discipline that you sense God is leading you to work on? I (Heather) sat in church and prayed about how my dissertation might bless the world or connect others to Jesus in some way. But how? How would obscure nineteenth-century British poetry have anything to do with the grander story? Mostly, I wanted to leave academic life altogether because

of what I had experienced. So far, my academic life had been filled with shame: shame from professors who mocked the Christian worldview, shame from realizing nobody wanted to read the Bible alongside Milton’s *Paradise Lost* or Puritan memoirs, shame from feeling like I didn’t measure up and could never teach or research well. I sat there, burning with shame over all I’d experienced in the academic world so far. I was tormented by inferiority, fear of failure, and the belief that I would never be the professor I had longed to become.

It felt like sorrow inside of me. It was deeply distressing to think that the Bible and Jesus didn’t fit in with an academic calling, especially since professors overtly told me so. Christian scholarship, I was told, was outdated and unintellectual; the Bible, as an inaccurate and nonauthoritative text, could never be a starting point or used as evidence; and Christians should certainly never identify as such in a postmodern climate celebrating no absolute truth. This was the culture of tolerance, of the social construction of “truth,” and of scholarship in the humanities that prized gender studies, historicity, and deconstructionism. I did not belong here with my enthusiasm over scripture, my interest in beauty and imagination, and my growing love of British nineteenth-century poetry.

But nevertheless, I prayed that Jesus would give me wisdom and lead me to some way to integrate British romanticism and biblical truth. What does a Christian scholar do in the nexus between colliding worldviews?

I sat in church, praying about this impossible dilemma. The preacher asked the congregation to turn to 2 Corinthians 7:10, and he read aloud: “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but *worldly sorrow* brings death.”

My ears perked up, and I lifted my chin in the air like a hound dog on a scent. The pastor asked that day, “What is the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow?” Or in other words, *What is the difference between shame (worldly sorrow) and guilt (godly sorrow)?* He suggested that guilt was right and good—the feeling that we have sinned and need forgiveness. Jesus removes our guilt. Shame, however, is the belief that we are terrible, that everyone sees us as insufficient, and so we hide away, covering ourselves like Adam and Eve in the garden. *Shame has no remedy. It should not ever be the Christian’s experience.*

Like scaffolding rising up around my little poems and notebooks filled with observations into Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Barrett Browning, I recalled every poem about shame and tormenting inferiority. I recalled all the letters these poets wrote showcasing their shameful acts. I recalled Coleridge’s poems that grappled with shame and guilt. These poets asked the same question the pastor did; these poets, like Paul, knew no escape from shame but a

full escape from guilt because of Jesus. Guilt has a remedy; shame does not. This presented a problem to solve in the realm of theology, psychology of emotion, and lyric poetry that articulated—and made intelligible—the same emotional states Paul discussed.

And so it all began. I had a problem to solve that would illuminate the British poets, the theology of guilt and shame, the problem of understanding elusive emotional states, and also my own personal struggle with shame. For years, I studied shame and guilt and unearthed all the ways theologians in the nineteenth century considered how we might heal from what psychologists call one of the most toxic emotions humans can experience. In a broader application—beyond my own need to heal and understand the poems I loved so much—my research provided insight into how professors could turn away from shame-based teaching strategies. It provided an apparatus for teaching recovery from distressing emotions. It earned me my PhD and provided a curriculum base for how professors teach the British romantics. I praise God that He blended together my own need to recover from shame with my research in nineteenth-century versions of shame to heal me and provide insight into the biblical understanding of shame and guilt.

As I counsel others on how to choose a new research direction, I remember the day I prayed in church, begging God to show me what was next. I believe the Holy Spirit planted a seed of interest through His word and that pastor, but I also believe my research had already been prepared in advance by a God who was orchestrating the events of my life to that moment. I often suggest these questions:

- What troubles you about your own life and walk with God?
- Do you have a sustained interest in a topic that continues to surface through providential conversations, circumstances, and desires?
- Do you have a great question that, when answered, could contribute to human flourishing?

I meet with professors who are following their desires to meet the needs of our country and the world in the sociology of women's health, clean water efforts in Kenya, and mental health research, all based on these questions.

We pray that the above list of questions help you narrow in on a particular calling within your own field. Of course, a great number of our scholarly pursuits might, on the surface, not offer great promise for making a unique Christian contribution. God is honored by our faithful attention to these! Yet

as Christian scholars purposefully look for direction in their research and academic pursuits, God will use them, not only to advance or defend perspectives that are important, but also to bless the world.

But still, the conviction that one can voice a Christian worldview still stands as a challenge to academics.

Refuse to Sequester Jesus

These next two points cohere. In today's academy, for variegated reasons, voices from different quarters find agreement on this point: Christian perspectives should be sequestered from true academic pursuits. Jesus, if He is relevant at all, is certainly not welcome in its academic enterprise. Proponents of this perspective, even some Christians, argue for this position in a variety of ways. We mention but a sampling. More thorough responses may be found elsewhere.

Some believe that a foundational commitment to Christ runs counter to the spirit of free academic study. In Alvin Plantinga's famous article "On Christian Scholarship," he notes that a deeply cherished truth in today's academy is that the "only path to wisdom is that of the roaming, free-floating intellectual who has seen through the pretensions or naïveté of those who do make serious intellectual and moral commitments."²¹ Plantinga debunks this, making the case that every scholar brings basic presuppositions to each study, but nevertheless it seems that some Christian academics feel that if they bring Christian presuppositions to their academic inquiry, they betray academic integrity. The reality, however, is that we all bring foundational assumptions to our studies.

Elsewhere, in fact, Plantinga urges Christian scholars to pursue their disciplines *in light of* a Christian perspective:

So the Christian philosopher has his own topics and projects to think about; and when he thinks about the topics of current concern in the broader philosophical world, he will think about them in his own way, which may be a different way. He may have to reject certain currently fashionable assumptions about the philosophic enterprise—he may have to reject widely accepted assumptions as to what are the proper starting points and procedures for philosophical endeavor. And—and this is crucially important—the Christian philosopher has a perfect right to the point of view and prephilosophical assumptions he brings to philosophic work; the fact that these are not widely shared outside the Christian or theistic community is interesting but fundamentally irrelevant.²²

Plantinga extends this to all disciplines, not just philosophy.

Some desire to sequester Jesus to the realm of the religious studies department. Most campuses have chapels, multiple religious student groups, and religious studies departments, and this, it is said, is the place for Christian perspectives. One reason for this is rooted in the Enlightenment, as British theologian and author Lesslie Newbigin explains: "The thinkers of the Enlightenment spoke of their age as the age of reason, and by reason they meant essentially those analytical and mathematical powers by which human beings could attain (at least in principle) to a complete understanding of, and thus a full mastery of, nature—of reality in all its forms. Reason, so understood, is sovereign in this enterprise. It cannot bow before any authority other than what it calls the facts. No alleged divine revelation, no tradition however ancient, and no dogma however hallowed has the right to limit its exercise."²³

Others believe "science" (read "naturalism") has proven there is no need for God/Christian perspectives. For example, the headline of the September 28, 2014, edition of the *International Business Times* reads, "Stephen Hawking Declares That Science Can Prove God Does Not Exist."²⁴ To be fair, if one believes that science has proven God does not exist, it is understandable why some would want to exclude Christian perspectives.

Other arguments could be mentioned as well. If Jesus is the One who is before all things, the Creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, and the goal of all things, then He must be relevant. by those who believe Jesus should be sequestered from intellectual consideration on campus. This is not the place for a more complete list or a thoughtful response to each—doubtless, Christian philosophers and scholars do this far better than we do—but if Jesus is the One who is before all things, the Creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, and the goal of all things, then He must be relevant to the pursuit of knowledge, to disciplines such as biology, anthropology, and English.

Precisely how Jesus relates to psychology, math, or art is a fair question, and an important pursuit, but beyond the scope of this work.²⁵

Put simply, it is foundational that Christian professors see Christ in His full glory, as the Lord of the earth, and resist the tide, whatever the rationale, to sequester Him to the margins, outside of the realm of academic pursuits. It is also essential for the Christian scholar and teacher to live with integrity—that state of wholeness where faith blends beautifully with work, where Christian identity infuses everything one does, including scholarship. Here is Plantinga's plea:

So here again: my plea is for the Christian philosopher, the Christian philosophical community, to display, first, more independence and autonomy: we needn't take as our research projects just those projects that currently enjoy widespread popularity; we have our own questions to think about. Secondly, we must display more integrity. We must not automatically assimilate what is current or fashionable or popular by way of philosophical opinion and procedures; for much of it comports ill with Christian ways of thinking. And finally, we must display more Christian self-confidence or courage or boldness. We have a perfect right to our pre-philosophical views: why, therefore, should we be intimidated by what the rest of the philosophical world thinks plausible or implausible?

Christian scholarship begins with the basic refusal to sequester Jesus from the academic enterprise. Renowned English essayist and Christian humanist Dorothy Sayers's words seem apropos: "It is fatal to let people suppose that Christianity is only a mode of feeling. It is vitally necessary to insist that it is first and foremost a rational explanation of the universe."²⁶

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—D. Sayers

Begin, and End, with Jesus

This perspective—begin and end with Jesus—flows from the Bible story line. Let's first consider that Christian thought requires that we *end* with Jesus.

Litfin proposes an imaginary dialogue among three colleagues regarding a particular discipline—one a Christian, one a Muslim, and a third identifying as a secularist.²⁷ The goal of the conversation is not to convert one party or the other but to simply interact on a particular subject. Three concentric circles illustrate this discussion. The inner circle would represent all the data, or perspectives, shared by all three, regardless of their "religious" pre-suppositions. The second circle would represent questions and observations related to a theistic worldview, one shared by the Muslim and the Christian. A Muslim and a Christian scholar not only want to explore the inner circle of "what is," but they desire to consider the second circle: *How does "what is" fit within a theistic world?* And the outer circle would represent thinking unique to the Christian. Litfin explains, "All of the circles surely represent 'Christian'

thinking—that is, they contain things a Christian does in fact think.”²⁸ Yet the Christian scholar is seeking to “end” by asking, “How does these data or disciplines fit into a world viewed from a Christian perspective?” As most analogies do, this one breaks down eventually (see below), but it helpfully illustrates that Christian thinking is not *less* than what our colleagues do but rather *more*.

To further explain this notion, Litfin appeals to two of C. S. Lewis’s most famous essays: “Meditation in a Tool Shed”²⁹ and “Transposition.”³⁰ To think Christianly about any subject means that we don’t simply look at the “facts,” but rather we look along them, toward what they point *to*. Lewis writes in his essay “Transposition,” “You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand *pointing*. You point to a bit of food on the floor; the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning.”³¹

The philosopher Arthur Holmes draws a similar conclusion:

Christ is the focal center to which all other truth about everything in creation is ultimately connected. Whatever we understand about nature is ultimately about his creative wisdom and power; whatever we do in human art and science ultimately comes from the creative and rational potential that God invested in men by making us in his own image. To understand this centrality of Jesus Christ in all knowledge gives perspective to moral and social issues, to interpersonal relations, marriage, and work, in fact to every thing in all the arts and sciences of men. With a unified view like this, we can think whole.³²

Not only *can* we think “whole”; we *must* think whole. The question “How does this fit into the Christian perspective?” enhances our private inquiry into our work, but at times it also provides public opportunities to dialogue, present differences, and engage the dominant, often unquestioned viewpoints within the academy.

Not only does Christian thinking “end” with Jesus, but the Bible and its story line give us beginning convictions as well. As Alvin Plantinga noted above, Christians *bring* truth claims to their intellectual studies. These two bookends flow from a Christian worldview. Those who believe God made the world and spoke truth about it bring presuppositions to their study, regarding both the beginning and their ultimate end.

We are aware that “end with Jesus” and “start with Jesus” are intensely complex discussions, yet from interacting with Christian professors, we find

that both basic premises are at times denied but more often not even considered. We suggest that Christian scholarship necessitates both.

I (Heather) stared with wonder at Colossians 1:17, where Paul writes, “Christ is before things, and in him all things hold together,” and later, in Colossians 2:3, “[In Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (NIV). I wrote in my journal the double mystery of this: that Christ was “in” everything I was studying somehow and that by studying Christ I would learn all the treasures of wisdom. I have to take seriously the argument in Psalm 19 that the heavens “declare the glory of God” and that the skies “proclaim the work of his hands.” The psalmist claims that creation “pours forth speech” and can “reveal knowledge.”

What speech? What knowledge?

I read a quote from missionary and theologian E. Stanley Jones that “all things have the stamp of Christ upon them” and that His will is “wrought into their very structure.”³³ As I turn to consider the book of Romans, I learn that “since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made” (Rom. 1:20, NIV). How would my work in the humanities change if I truly believed that wrought into the very structure of language—of semicolons and verbs and the rhythms of sentences—something of Christ might be found? Some principle, some wisdom, some beauty? I began to ponder if the greatest work of my life would be to uncover *where Christ was* in whatever I studied or researched.

As I read articles in my field of study—a field concerned with definitions of the self, imagination, power, personal authority, and transcendence—I could easily begin with Jesus by interrogating what the primary texts and scholarly articles contributed to the conversation about what it meant to be human from a biblical perspective. I could ask first, “What does the Bible tell us about the origins of selfhood? What is a self? What does Jesus tell me about power, authority, and transcendence, and how can I now dialogue from the Christian worldview here?” I could even begin with Jesus by recognizing that the sublime experiences that the romantics sought and wrote about have their roots in the religious sublime of figures who fall on their knees in fear and wonder before the Lord. I could also ask questions in direct opposition to what the writers of the time prized, whether self-aggrandizement or power. I could ask, “How is weakness a privileged position? How is self-abandonment a higher goal? How does power corrupt the soul?” I could begin with different assumptions that guided inquiry from a Christian worldview.

Be Gracious and Charitable in Disagreement

Twice in my academic career, I (Heather) have had major disagreements with my department head. Each time, my Cru mentor advised me to approach controversy within the department by beginning with the statement, “I’m confused. Would you help me understand what is happening here?” Instead of storming into my boss’s office with a list of grievances, each time, I said, “I’m confused. Can you help me?” This gracious, charitable question diffused conflict and moved him from a reactive, defensive state to a responsive one. I learned to believe the best, begin with a gracious question, and state what I believe kindly.

Besides learning the power of gracious questions during controversy, I learned how to “take the lowest place” as a servant. Many times, other faculty have tried to receive credit for something I produced or make a department decision that disregarded me. The Lord reminded me of Philippians 2 and how our “attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but humbled himself, taking on the nature of a servant.” This servant attitude did not mean I neglected to stand up for the truth about my work when not receiving credit, for example. But I did so in a loving, private way that avoided humiliating others or proving I was right in a public setting. This moment wasn’t about me needing public recognition; it was more about truth-telling and standing up for what was right. When God purifies my motivations in my speech and behavior in the face of conflict, I find that others respond with favor and contrition instead of reacting with anger and defensiveness. Similarly, I was recently offered a special one-year appointment in my department that did not come with fair compensation. Since I believe “a worker deserves [her] wages” (1 Tim. 5:18), I approached the leadership with truth and clarity about what compensation was right and fair for my work. Because I came to them not demanding or embittered but with a gentle spirit, I could dialogue peacefully and maintain great relationships with my supervisors. I balanced a servant’s attitude with one that upholds truth and fairness. And since I was a fixed-term faculty member (not tenure line), I realized that others in my position often fail to receive a fair salary even when working the same hours as tenured faculty. I could speak up for others who perhaps couldn’t dialogue at the level of university leadership, with whom I had an audience that day. This reminded me of the command in Proverbs 31:8 (NIV): “Speak up for others who cannot speak for themselves.”

Run to the Front

In 2014, an epidemic of the Ebola virus broke out in West Africa, killing more than twenty-eight thousand people across Liberia, Sierra Leone, and other African countries. The first doctors to respond to this worldwide crisis were Christians affiliated with groups such as the CMDA (Christian Medical and Dental Association), Samaritan’s Purse, and Serving In Mission, among other Christian groups. During this time of crisis, I (Rick) had many rich conversations with a good friend who is an infectious disease professor at a leading research university. We talked openly about the nightly news, the information he was receiving from Africa about the epidemic, and what Christian participation might look like. Part of our conversations touched on his desire, as a devoted Christ follower and a trained expert in this field, to personally go to Liberia. My friend wondered aloud, “This is, after all, what God called, and gifted, me to do, right?”

In the midst of the crisis, in October of 2014, social anthropologist Brian Palmer wrote an article for *Slate* magazine. The subtitle was “Should we worry that so many of the doctors treating Ebola in Africa are missionaries?”³⁴ Palmer admits what, at the time, the whole world knew: those who showed up, at the front, were Christians. Personally, he found this troubling, but he concludes, “As an atheist, I try to make choices based on evidence and reason. So until we’re finally ready to invest heavily in secular medicine for Africa I suggest we stand aside and let God do His work.”

We suggest this epidemic presents a wonderful picture of Christian academics: when there is a great worldwide crisis, where there are academic (and other) issues of immense importance, should there be opportunities to bless the world, you will find talented Christian academics responding to the call. This is a broken world. Every day, all around us, we encounter a staggering number of critical issues and problems that need addressing. This is our world, the world to which God has called us. Run to the front, bringing with you the hope of Jesus Christ to the front lines.

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These next two sections—about the relationships of academe and ways to serve within the academy and the world—will be exceptionally brief, largely due to space considerations and the fact that much of this will be poignantly illustrated in the professors’ stories in the next six chapters.

Relationships (with Colleagues and Students)

How does a Christ-following professor relate to his or her peers and students? All Christian academics value “the life of the mind,” yet in our departments, minds come with bodies; our research necessarily involves people. One could even make the case (and some of the professors in the following chapters do) that our greatest impact as academics often occurs through the relationships around us.

I (Heather), both as a PhD student and then as a faculty member, noted the particular attitude of the academic culture. I found myself in a culture primarily consisting of complaint, criticism, gossip, entitlement, and competition. Instead of a spirit of peacemaking, finding the good, believing the best, serving, and collaborating, the spirit of the department felt toxic and soul-dehydrating. As I spent time in the scriptures, I was struck by the astonishingly different portrait of a Spirit-filled Christian. God’s Spirit within Christians produces the Christlike attitude of thanksgiving and rejoicing in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:18), not arguing or complaining (Phil. 2:14), and humble servanthood (Phil. 2). In humility, I was “to consider others better than [myself].” And as I looked at James 3 and the characteristics of the wise person, I noted that wisdom was “peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”

God had to change so much about me. I asked him to transform me from complaining to thankful, from one who only asked what was wrong with research or a seminar to one who also asked what was right about it, from the gossipier to the encourager, from feeling entitled to believing others were more important, and from competitive to truly collaborative. How I treated others mattered; in fact, relationships were as significant as my research. The people in my department mattered deeply to Jesus.

My years at Michigan taught me to love my cohort and to seek to bless my advisors and professors in practical ways like providing airport rides, offering comfort in crisis, and helping with research or teaching loads. Instead of isolating myself with my dusty anthologies of Wordsworth and Coleridge, I considered the divine appointment of people all around me. Life became full and rich and joyful with relationships. I hosted parties; I arranged “Encouragement Groups” for those in dissertation-writing stages; I gathered others for Bible studies; I took people shopping. I spent time with others as part of my calling in my department.

The importance of relationships came into sharp relief the day I received a phone call from my friend who had just received the highest promotion possible in her role at an Ivy League school. She told me the news, but she was crying.

“Kathy, why are you crying?” I asked.

“Because when I heard the news of this huge promotion—the greatest achievement of my life—I had no one to tell. I got on the bus and went home to my house. I had no one to tell.”

She had no one to tell.

The loneliness I heard, and the desperation that she had valued the wrong things in her life, is a sound I’ll never forget.

Twenty years later, my husband, Ashley, and I encourage graduate students and professors to value relationships as part of God’s design for them. On several occasions, we have had PhD students come to our home and comment that during that semester, for the first time in their lives, they had real friends. At Penn State I gather with some faculty for coffee on Mondays for a discipleship time before we leave for teaching and office hours. During these meetings, we pray about transforming from being part of the dominant academic culture to being agents of blessing, peace, thanksgiving, and humility. We talk about kindness and forgiveness. We talk about loving well.

Sometimes we brainstorm simple ways to bless professors, like baking cookies, inviting people over for dinner, or hosting a banquet in their honor on our campus. We talk about taking the time to listen and delivering a meal or a gift when a professor has a writing or research deadline. We make lists of hurting faculty and consider how we can pray for them, introduce them to Jesus, and then walk alongside them to help them grow.

In the chapters that follow, you’ll read beautiful accounts of professors loving well and attaching to the grander story. You’ll read about Dr. Elzinga’s attitude of “foot washing” and Dr. Bishop’s “ministry of presence.” You’ll read about collaboration and mentoring from Dr. Walkup and the great love of students from Dr. Siaw and myself. You’ll read all the ways Dr. Bradley engages with students and other faculty to truly bless them. I want to encourage you to see the people of the academy not as distractions to what God has called you to as a Christian professor but as exactly those to whom God has called you to as a Christian professor. It is vitally important that we love well and serve well. In a surprising way, this kindness not only blesses others and our departments, but it paves the way for others to consider our God.

The other day, I (Rick) read a statement by professor of theology Millard Erickson that reminds me of Heather’s comments above. He suggests evangelical scholars take the following pledge:

I will not point out the presuppositions of another's position without acknowledging that I have presuppositions myself. I will not contend that another's view is historically conditioned without conceding that mine is also. I will be more concerned not to misunderstand or misrepresent others' views than to claim that mine has been misunderstood or misrepresented. I will be more concerned that my language be fair and objective than I am that others' language about me may not be. I will not caricature my opponent's view to make my own appear more moderate. I will not employ *ad hominem* arguments. I will abstain from the use of pejorative language. I will not impute motives or emotions to others. I will think of intellectual arguments in terms of differences over ideas, not as personal disputes.³⁵

He proposes that Christian academics live lives that reflect their God. Andreas Köstenberger suggests, "We, as Christians, need to lead the way in changing the academic culture of engagement in a positive direction and in encouraging civility of scholarly discourse. We should be the ones setting the example of love."³⁶ It would be a great and powerful day if this were true across the country.

We, as Christians, need to lead the way in changing the academic culture . . .

We should be setting the example of love.

—Andreas Köstenberger

I remember a particular professor at one of our national faculty conferences who commented in her address, "You know how God gets into departmental meetings? Through me." So true. Christian professors have all sorts of opportunities to love well, to serve, and to be a blessing in their various responsibilities. They have many opportunities to not only lend their expertise to the whole but lead the way by caring for those around them.

We also encourage students—not just professors—to view each class as a calling from God: "What if God has put you in Calculus 101 to not only learn about derivatives but also to be used by Him to be a blessing to your professor and to those around you?" But this is equally true for professors. Each class. Every student. These are God-given opportunities for you to bless those around you.

In sum, a Christian professor's calling from God is not simply to academic endeavors but to the people God has placed around him or her. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but

for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. . . . All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:14–20).

Service (to the University and the World)

Space does not allow all we would like to explore here, yet in the following chapters, you'll read of so many ways these professors have served in their universities and the world. In the next chapter, Dr. Ken Elzinga presents his paradigm for how he serves students, shaped by John 13, where Jesus served the disciples by washing their feet. He believes Jesus has set an example of serving others, so we too should serve those around us. It might seem preposterous to suggest that an acclaimed scholar should serve his students, but surely not nearly as preposterous as the Son of God washing the feet of Galilean fishermen. God has called us *as academics* to serve in our departments, universities, and the world, and this service both honors Him and blesses the world.

Otis Pickett, assistant professor of history and political science at Mississippi College, paired up with Patrick Alexander from the University of Mississippi to create the Mississippi Prison to College Pipeline program, offering for-credit college courses to prerelease incarcerated students at the Mississippi State Penitentiary. Pickett comments, "It's easy for academics to sit around and talk about issues related to incarceration, but Patrick and I wanted to actually do something . . . We had heard a lot about the 'school-to-prison pipeline' in Mississippi. Our thought was, why not create a prison-to-college pipeline?"³⁷ God has so blessed universities with resources and relationships that He can use to meet the needs of our country and the world.

The stories that follow present varied ways professors can serve in their universities and world. It is our hope, however, that these stories from these upcoming chapters will serve to "prime the pump" for generations to come. There are endless ways Christians in academe, whose identity is in Jesus, who follow His lead, can offer their lives to serve. This "grand story" way of living both blesses all around them and blesses the world and makes much of His name, for His glory. This might surprise many, but historically the university, particularly students, has often been on the front edge of revival and mission to the world.

In chapters 5–10, you will read the stories of six professors who have strived to live out their academic careers as followers of Christ. These journeys vary

widely—from the East Coast to the West, from the humanities to the sciences, and from extrovert to introvert—yet common threads run through them. These are powerful stories of God at work through men and women who find their hope in Christ and who follow Him all the days of their academic journeys. We know you will enjoy them.

Reflecting on the Grander Story

1. Heather begins the chapter with the claim that the most important thing a Christ-following professor does is “abide in Christ and bear fruit.” How would you describe to another person what it means to “abide in Christ”? Have you personally experienced abiding in Christ? If so, how?
2. The Puritan Stephen Charnock wrote:

In the consideration of this excellent attribute [God’s knowledge], what low thoughts should we have of our own knowledge, and how humble ought we to be before God! There is nothing man is more apt to be proud of than his knowledge; it is a perfection he glories in; but if our own knowledge of the little outside and barks of things puffs us up, the consideration of the infiniteness of God’s knowledge should abate the tumor: as our beings are nothing in regard to the infiniteness of his essence, so our knowledge is nothing in regard of the vastness of his understanding.

Have you ever met a humble scholar? What made this person appear “humble” to you? What impact did his or her humility make on you?

3. How would your attitude and actions change if you pursued your academics as “unto Christ”?
4. What are some of the guiding principles and methodologies that compose the narrative of your discipline? What are some ways these are congruent with the Bible story line? Where are some tensions?
5. What are some particular ways you could contribute a Christian perspective—even if it wasn’t labeled as such—to current conversations in your discipline?
6. In chapter 9, Dr. Walkup states that he thinks his greatest legacy as an academic will be through his relationships. What are 5–10 ways God could use you to tangibly be a relational blessing, right now, in your sphere of influence at your university?

7. What are some tangible ways you can model good character in your department?
8. How are curiosity, humility, and worship expressed in your academic pursuits? What are some personal steps you might take to grow in each as you grow as a scholar?

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PART 2

GRANDER LIVES

