

**The World's Greatest
Professor**

Dr. Micah Stohlmann

© 2017 Micah Stohlmann

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other, without the prior written permission of the author.

Scripture quotations are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

First printing: January 2017

ISBN-13: 978-1539330394

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working
for the Lord, not for human masters.*
Colossians 3:23

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	7
Research	17
Teaching	37
Service	56
Conclusion	71
References	88

Introduction

God is the world's greatest professor because He is the best at research, teaching, and service. He is an excellent writer and communicator and has validated his conceptual framework and ideas multiple times. God is the greatest teacher ever and is able to change lives for the better. He is a model of service and serves in all areas of the world.

Every year professors are evaluated on what they have done in these three main areas—research, teaching, and service. Research involves writing articles for publication and applying for grants. Teaching includes instructing classes as well as advising and mentoring students. Service can be in the form of service to the department, college, or university through work on committees or special events. Service can also be done with the profession through work in organizations or journals. Volunteering hours to the community such as schools can also be a form of service.

Professors are a prime profession to connect to the Christian faith as there is a great need for professors to see the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Sadly, 48.3% of

professors think that the Bible is only an “ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts.” While atheists and agnostics in the United States make up about 3 and 4.1 percent of the population, respectively, the numbers can be much higher for certain fields for professors. Fifty percent of professors of psychology are atheists and 44.1 percent of mechanical engineering professors are atheists. For biologists a combined 60.8 percent are agnostic or atheist. Also, the more elite a university is, the greater number of atheist/agnostic professors there are. It is worth noting, though, that overall the majority of professors are Christian.¹

The goal for this book is to have people learn more about what it takes to be a successful professor and to see how the true inspired Word of God is able to connect to the work of professors. You will hopefully see how God is the world’s greatest professor and how God’s love can guide the work of professors and all areas of life. If you are not a professor you can still grow in the Christian faith through this book by seeing the Christian faith through a new perspective.

Professors are supposed to be experts in an area of their chosen field. However, God is an expert in all areas of life. God knows everything about the world because He created the entire universe. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* Genesis 1:1. God created humans and knows everything about all people as even *the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* Luke 12:7. Psalm 104 further states that we should praise God because of this. He is the Creator and still takes care of His creation. God knows more than anyone else and He uses His wisdom well. Because of this professors and people of any careers can look to God for how to best do their job. The wisdom and truth that is in the Bible is effectively communicated to guide our whole lives.

People often turn to professors for advice or comments on important issues where professors have expertise. The whole Bible is God's inspired Word and in it there are many stories where Christians receive wisdom from God. The pastor at the church where I grew up, Pastor Steve Benson, when talking to children about stories in the Bible always emphasized that they are true stories that really

happened. It is an important point to make for children and those new to the faith.

In Exodus we read how Moses was given instructions for how to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and continued to receive guidance from God in how to take care of the people. The greatest example of God sharing his expertise with Moses was when He gave him the Ten Commandments. Through this, Christians have a guide for how to live lives motivated by God's love.

The words of James 1:5 are true for a number of situations in the Bible. *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.* Noah received instructions for how to build an ark. Solomon asked for wisdom and God granted it to him. Gideon was given guidance for how to defeat his enemies. At Pentecost the disciples received power from God when the Holy Spirit descended upon them. It is the same power that all Christians have as the Holy Spirit offers us wisdom and guidance for our lives.

Professors should recognize that all knowledge comes from God and the most important knowledge is that

which is contained in the Bible. While in graduate school I was reading through the Bible and came across Ecclesiastes 12:12 and found it very fitting. *Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.* In verse 11 it states that we should focus on the words of wisdom in the Bible and the start of verse 12 notes that anything not Biblically based should not be trusted. The second half of verse 12, *much study wearies the body*, I found very fitting in graduate school as it required a lot of study. It definitely hit home and is a reminder to all professors that too much reading and writing is not a good thing. Balance is key.

1 Corinthians 8:1a is another important verse to remember. *Knowledge puffs up while love builds up.* Some times people with a lot of knowledge can look down on others, but it is important to remember that showing love to others should be our goal. Everyone has knowledge to share, and all good knowledge comes from God, so it is important to give God glory for any good things. This way no matter what subject a professor's field, the work that is done can

point back to the greatest knowledge and wisdom that is ever known in the Bible.

My alma mater, Concordia University, St. Paul, has a seal with words in Latin that was designed by Dr. Theodore Buenger in 1895: *In litteris proficere vole, malo diligere Jesum*. This may be translated, “I wish to be proficient in academics, but even more I wish to know Jesus.” It is based on Ephesians 3:19: *And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge*. This places learning in the context of the Christian Gospel.

There are many valuable verses in the Bible about knowledge. Proverbs 16:16 is a great verse that is on the wall of the library of Concordia University, St. Paul. *How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!* It is an excellent reminder that being wise is more to be valued than money.

There is a story of a poor farmer that was invited to a wealthy rancher’s mansion for a tour. The farmer didn’t even know how to react when the rancher showed him famous paintings, old furniture, and beautiful fountains. The rancher commented, “This furniture is my favorite. It is so

expensive and old. It goes back to Louie the 14th." The farmer then responded, "I can relate to that. My couch goes back to Sears on the 13th." It all goes back eventually. Possessions and money are only temporary, but knowledge is something that can stay with someone forever.

What is the greatest knowledge that we can have? No amount of money can give you what you want. Only Christ can meet the deepest need of life. What Christians have in Christ is greater than anything that they have or don't have in life. Paul states the importance of knowing Christ in Philippians 3:8-9. *What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.* Paul states that in comparison to knowing Christ all other knowledge is garbage. This does not mean that other knowledge is not useful in life or for a person's career, but knowing Christ is far more valuable than all other knowledge. Only through Christ are Christians forgiven. Only through Christ are Christians saved. Only through Christ are Christians given the free gift of eternal life in heaven. Nothing can compare to this!

My life as a professor

My area of research is mathematics and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. Specifically, I focus on mathematical modeling which simply put is using mathematics to make sense of the real world. I develop and research curricula innovations that can help students see mathematics as more real life and applicable. While working on these activities students can develop important life skills that they will need in any job including communication, teamwork, and presentation skills.

While I still have much to learn about being a quality professor, I am off to an excellent start in my work. Through my doctoral work I received a 3M STEM fellowship, a Haugo fellowship, and a Haugo dissertation fellowship. As an assistant professor I have been awarded the Early Career Award and the Distinguished Teaching Award from my college. I was also nominated for the Distinguished Research Award.

There can be a lot of change in the life of a professor. It is important to stay up to date by doing a lot of reading in

one's chosen field. Research and funding trends can change so professors need to be in tune with the latest focus and developments. Colleagues and administration change over time, as well as the students that professors work with.

One of the great things about the Christian faith is found in the words in Hebrews 13:8, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*. It is stated again in Malachi 3:6, *I the Lord do not change*. **While life is full of changes, to throw in some mathematics terms, God is *constant* while we are the *variables***. We can trust and rely that God's love is the same for us. People experience different things in life that can strengthen or weaken their faith; which is why it is important to stay focused on God. It is only through God and the saving faith that is offered by Him, that we are able to be made right. Everyone is a sinner and is in need of a Savior. God freely offers forgiveness of sins and life everlasting in heaven. It is all because of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross and glorious resurrection that this is possible. That does not vary, no matter what change happens in our lives. God is the cornerstone and rock upon which we can draw our strength from in this life.

Because of this, professors can take the following approach to their work and life, which is a great Bible verse that I have on the wall of my office. *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.* Colossians 3:23. Professors are evaluated in their work and must meet a level of productivity. However, professors can see their work as a calling from God to help others. In light of this, work can be done to give glory to God and not oneself! Any good things are from God so God deserves to be praised because of this. *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.* James 1:17.

This book will discuss how the Christian faith is connected to quality characteristics of **research**, **teaching**, and **service**. A few of the main points of research are to build on others' knowledge, keep learning, and collaborate with others. For teaching it is important for it to be based on research, to have clear expectations for students, and to make learning meaningful. Service can focus on matching abilities to need and helping others.

Chapter 1: Research

Research is a large part of a professor's job at larger universities. So much so, that it is considered the most important part of a professor's job. This is because when a professor becomes known for their research expertise it can provide prestige and funding for a university. It can be a challenge to conduct successful and meaningful research however. It certainly takes time and hard work to develop expertise in research. If a research study is not set up well then it can lead to inconclusive or untrustworthy results.

Take for instance the following 2008 study, "You are what your mother eats." It was reported widely in the media even though there were many issues that made the findings inaccurate. The authors of the study asserted that children born to mothers who eat breakfast cereal are more likely to be boys. This is not true and the study was not valid. First of all, the study was an observational study, which means no random assignment or random sampling was done so the results could not be generalized past the sample in the study. Also 132 foods were tested and with so many tests the

p-value, or level of significance, should have been adjusted making the results not significant.

While we cannot always believe what we read in the media or research studies for that matter, God's Word can always be trusted. It is valid and reliable and will be for all time. *Every word of God is flawless.* Proverbs 30:5a. God can always be trusted. He does not break any of His promises. *For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.* Psalm 33:4.

Sometimes research can be criticized for not being practical or of importance to most people, but God's Word is always relevant to all people and real. In Luke 2, the angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds by saying, *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for **all** the people.* The Gospel message is good news that God desires all to know and believe in. *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to **everyone** who believes.* Romans 1:16.

God's Word contains wisdom that is helpful and transforming. In 1960 two researchers Lang and Lang wanted to study audience behavior at a Billy Graham

crusade. The power of God's Word was shown when they ended up walking down the aisle becoming Christians!¹ The knowledge of God's grace and love that is in the Bible changes lives everyday for the better.

This chapter will discuss several recommendations for conducting quality research that can be connected to insights from the Bible. Professors must be able to build on one another's knowledge, continue to learn, enjoy writing, and collaborate with others.

Build on one another's knowledge

For professors to get published they must be able to show how their work fits in and advances previous research. The literature review that comes at the beginning of a journal article can be the toughest part of a paper to write. It takes a lot of work to read through and intelligently discuss the related research so that others will agree that there is a rationale and logical coherence for the study that was conducted. If a professor does not make a strong case for the significance of an article, then it can be difficult to get published.

Arnold Jacobs took the approach of reading relevant literature to the extreme when he decided to read the entire encyclopedia in one year; all 44 million words. He found out quite some interesting information from his reading. The French horn is from Germany. The Great Dane has no relation to Denmark. Cold-blooded animals often have warmer blood than warm-blooded animals. Robert Boyle, Anglo-Irish chemist, wrote a book with the best one-size-fits-all title: *Occasional Reflections on Several Subjects*. Casanova, famous for his charm, ended his life as a librarian.²

Christians know that our faith is built on God's Word. While I would not recommend reading through the encyclopedia, it is a great idea to read through the Bible in a year. There are pacing guides that are available on the Internet for this purpose. It is valuable to be able to mark your Bible with relevant stories and verses that you would like to keep with you. What we focus on is what we tend to remember so it is vital to spend time in God's Word each day.

Jesus often spoke words of Scripture to others and showed the importance of it being in our hearts and mind.

Since Jesus is God, the main difference here from researchers is that He was building on His own knowledge. In Matthew 21:42 Jesus states, *“Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.’”* Here Jesus is referencing Psalm 118:22-23. Jesus was referring to Himself as the cornerstone. He knew that He would be rejected and handed over to be crucified. Yet, we know that Jesus achieved victory through His death and resurrection so that He is the strength of our faith. He is our strong foundation.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert as recorded in Matthew 4, He responded with Scripture. Jesus had fasted for forty days and nights at this point and the devil told Him to tell the stones to become bread. Jesus replies with Deuteronomy 8:3, *“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”* The devil then takes Jesus to a high point and tries to twist the Word of God by telling Jesus to throw himself down because the Bible says, *He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.* Psalm 91:11,12.

Jesus however, appropriately responds with Deuteronomy 6:16 *“It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

Finally, the devil tries one last time and promises to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow down and worship him. Jesus again rebuffs the devil with Scripture, this time from Deuteronomy 6:13. *“For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”*

This demonstrates the power of the Word of God. Jesus relied on it for strength and we can as well. When we feel temptation come we can use the Bible to help us stay strong to resist temptation. Paul states it this way in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* God’s Word is powerful and can return our focus on Him. It is the best knowledge to have and we should do our best to have it be the foundation of our life.

Keep learning

Professors need to keep learning if they are going to stay up to date in their field. Author and leadership expert, John Maxwell, says that the number one way that people make life harder for themselves is if they stop growing and learning. Sometimes professors can become complacent once they are promoted to associate or full professors because they have more security, resting on past accomplishments. This is true for even Nobel Prize winners. Few Nobel Prize winners do anything significant after they have received the award.³

Complacency and not putting in the needed work will only make more work for professors in the long run. Once professors stop staying up to date on recent research, it gets harder to catch up on research. Also, research skills are like any other skills, if they are not practiced then they can start to decrease.

Along with the ability to keep learning, an important part of research is not to get depressed about rejection or failure. Rejection is a part of academic life. Every professor has proposals turned down and articles that are not

accepted. There is actually a humorous journal called, The Journal of Universal Rejection⁴. All submissions, regardless of quality, will be rejected. A selling point of submitting to the journal is that, judged by acceptance rate, it is the most prestigious journal. Not to be outdone there is a Journal of Universal Acceptance, in which all submissions are accepted⁵.

Professors often will only put their successes on their CV, otherwise known as their resume. It can be daunting for new professors to see how much success some professors have had. However, if asked they would say that they have had much rejection as well but continued to learn from it and did not get discouraged. Some professors have even started to put their CV of failures on their websites that show rejections they have experienced to encourage others to continue to work hard and learn from these experiences. On one of my article submissions I was rejected by the first two journals where I submitted it. However, I learned from the reviewers' comments that I was given and worked to improve the paper because I believed that it was publishable. On the third journal submission, it was

accepted right away. It was a very satisfying publication because I did not give up and continued to work for improvement.

What does the Bible have to say about learning? The Bible extols Christians to continue to learn about the Christian faith and God's beautiful creation. *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.* Proverbs 22:6. *The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out.* Proverbs 18:15. The rationale for continuing to learn and grow is that God may be glorified. *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.* 2 Peter 3:18.

The Bible also warns against false teachings and so it is important to spend time in God's Word to rightly know the true message of the Bible. *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.* Colossians 2:8.

God's Word also can teach us about persevering through rejection as well. In the book of Genesis, we read

how Joseph was rejected by his brothers and sold into slavery. He kept a positive attitude through it all and strived to continue to make the best of his situation. He was put in charge of Potiphar's house and then all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, because he continued to pursue knowledge and held true to his faith.

Great Bible verses for our lives for times when we will go through trouble or hardship are Psalm 34:17-19. *The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.* God will give us the strength and determination to endure no matter what life brings.

Another excellent point to remember in times of rejection is that God has given Christians a spirit of determination. *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.* 2 Timothy 1:7. Because of this we should not give up when difficulties come but continue to work hard.

Enjoy writing

Professors have to do a lot of writing so it is vital that they enjoy it. One of the most important lessons to be learned is to just start writing and keep going. Often when looking back at what has been written, it is better than it seemed at the time.

Professors have different plans for writing. Some block out an hour every morning to write while others have a day of the week set aside for writing. My approach for writing is to put in a lot of work over several days and then take some time off. If writing is done closer together than the writing is fresher and over the long run less time will need to be spent on it.

A great book to help with writing is *Elements of Style*. One of the professors that I had in my doctoral work suggested that professors should read this book once every year. The book contains wisdom on how to write effectively. One of my favorite rules from the book is reminder 14: avoid fancy words. “If you admire fancy words, if every sky is *beauteous*, every blonde *curvaceous*, every intelligent child *prodigious*, if you are tickled by *discombobulate*, you will have

a bad time with reminder 14.”⁶ Some times the best writing is to the point and clear, without the need for big words.

Being concise is another important point of scholarly writing. Every word is important. “Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all sentences short or avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.”⁶ I have seen the importance of words in my work. I have submitted a grant proposal with over 7,000 words and a reviewer picked out three words that were included as a reason for rejection. Truly, every word is important and can make a difference. Writing is definitely a process and there can always be more revisions and improvements made.

Our Christian lives are a process as well because there are always things that we can improve. We are never going to be perfect but through God’s strength we can improve. No one has ever been condemned to death for a typo or writing mistake. Though there is a funny meme that

states that comma's save lives. The two statements: "Let's eat Grandma"; and "Let's eat, Grandma," have quite different meanings. However, for our Christian lives it would only take one of our many sins to condemn us. That is why it is so amazing that Christ has paid the price for our sins so that instead of death, we get eternal life in heaven!

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 contains a beautiful description of love.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Though we can strive to improve, we can never match the love of God. It can be a model for how we live our lives! Because God has forgiven us, we can forgive others when the love they show to us falters. The more we focus on God's Word and His love, the more the love we show to others will align with God's.

Every word in the Bible is the inspired Word of God and every word is important. From the longest verse in the

Bible, Esther 8:9, at 80 words to the shortest verse in the Bible, John 11:35, at two words; Jesus wept. One of the measures of a good publication is the number of times others cite it. The Bible is the most quoted book of all time. Nothing can match its wisdom and power. It has and will continue for all time to be the most important book. *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.* Isaiah 40:8.

Through some of the verses of two of the main writers God used to write His words for the Bible, Moses and Paul, we can learn more about how researchers can enjoy writing. In Genesis chapter 1, the creation of the world by God is recounted. The last verse of the chapter has God looking back at everything that He has made and noting “*it was very good.*”

God is creative and because humans are made in God’s image we feel fulfilled when we can be creative as well. While some may not see it this way, I believe that even academic writing is a creative process. Researchers need to craft their arguments and frame their work so that it is deemed significant and impactful. After submitting an

article it can be great to look back at what was accomplished and feel good about the work that has gone into it. It can be a chance to thank God for the ability to write and produce work that could be used to give glory to Him.

Paul writes some interesting related verses in 2 Corinthians chapter 3:2-3 about writing. *You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.* Paul wrote many letters to churches that are recorded in the Bible. Here he is saying that the members of the church are their own letters since people can see God's love through their words and actions.

Through what we do, we can give glory to God and serve as a witness for Christ. Not everyone enjoys writing and there are professors whose primary duty is to teach. Through what we produce, our written words, spoken words, and actions we can give credit for all good things to God. In all forms of communication God can be praised

because He created us and the whole wonderful world where we live.

The Bible is proof that written words are powerful and it should be the goal of all researchers to do impactful work. We can learn a lot about writing from National Hockey League player Jordan Leopold's daughter, Jordyn. Her dad was playing for the Columbus Blue Jackets in Ohio while his wife and kids lived in Minnesota. Jordyn decided to write to the General Manager of the Minnesota Wild to see if they would trade to get her dad to come play in Minnesota and be with his family. Jordyn stated that her dad was lonely in Ohio. The letter worked! Just before the trade deadline, the Minnesota Wild were able to make a trade to get Jordan Leopold back to Minnesota. I attended the NHL end of year awards and Jordyn even got to be a presenter at the awards show!

Through this story there are insights that can relate to professor's writings. Be willing to put in the time to write. Don't be afraid of rejection, just submit the writing and see what happens. Write what you are passionate about.

Collaborate with others

Research is a tough job that can be made easier by collaborating with others. With technology, collaboration has become easier and more efficient. In fact professors who work electronically from different physical locations tend to produce research that is more influential than those either working alone or collaborating face-to-face.⁷ In reality, I think a mix of collaborators are needed both face-to-face and over distance because professors can be involved in more projects this way.

Collaboration with others can provide different perspective. In the 1870s, a church conference was held at Westfield College in Illinois. The president of the college made the remark that men will soon fly like birds through the air. One bishop felt that this was heresy because the Bible says that flight is reserved for angels. Often in the church or academia there are different perspectives that can hopefully lead to productive discussion for improvement. In this case the bishop turned out to be wrong. The president of the college's last name was Wright and his two sons were Orville and Wilbur. They flew at Kitty Hawk on December

17th, 1903.⁸ Orville and Wilbur were able to work together to accomplish this great feat.

Another benefit of collaboration is that people can encourage each other. I have yet to meet a person who doesn't enjoy and benefit from encouragement. No one is too successful, old, experienced, or educated to appreciate positive praise and encouragement from another person.

There were two professors at Oxford who served this purpose for each other in their writings. One of them would say to the other, "Where's the next chapter? You can't give up now." The older professor summed up his appreciation for the encouragement he received this way, "The unspeakable debt I owe him cannot be fathomed. For long, he was my only audience."⁹ The world is much better off thanks to the encouragement and writings of these two professors, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. They both were prolific writers with some of their writings being made into the biggest movies of all-time: "The Chronicles of Narnia," "The Hobbit," and "The Lord of the Rings."

Both of the professors were Christians and there are definite Christian themes that can be seen in their books

including the battle between good and evil. C.S. Lewis was actually an atheist, but, in part due to Tolkien's influence, he became a Christian. All it takes is the encouragement of one person to make a difference. It is something that we can do for anyone and it does not cost anything to give.

Collaboration is essential for the Christian life. We are made to live together in community. Author Todd Gongwer states it this way, "Jesus taught over and over that our very existence was all about relationships—first with him, and then with others. That's why God created us in the first place."¹⁰ There are great benefits to community. Proverbs 27:17 reads, *As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.* Christians can support and help each other stay true to Christ and grow in their faith.

More great verses on collaboration come from Hebrews 10:24-25, *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* Christian community has great benefits. We can build up each other and invite others to know Jesus.

Recently agnostic scientist Bill Nye debated Christian, Ken Ham, the CEO of Answers in Genesis. The debate centered on the question, "Is Creation a Viable Model of Origins?" Bill Nye was asked the question, "What was before the Big Bang?" His response was, "That is the great mystery." Ken Ham responded, "Bill, I want to let you know that there is a book out there that actually tells us where man came from. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And that is the only thing that makes sense."¹¹ Professors need to do their research, which includes reading prior work. There is no greater written material than that which is in the Bible.

Chapter 2: Teaching

Teaching is an essential job for a professor because there would be no universities without students. Passing on knowledge to the next generation can make a large impact. In my role as a professor teaching is expected to be excellent because I am in the department of Teaching and Learning. We are supposed to be the experts on teaching and should definitely model quality pedagogy for our students. In order to make the most impact all professors should strive to develop successful students.

One of the best teaching stories about a professor that I have heard did not involve teaching content but an important life lesson. A professor stood before a class of thirty senior molecular biology students. Before he passed out the final exam he stated, "I have been privileged to be your instructor this semester, and I know how hard you have worked to prepare for this test. I also know most of you are off to medical school or grad school next fall. I am well aware of how much pressure you are under to keep your GPAs up, and because I am confident that you know this

material, I am prepared to offer an automatic B to anyone who opts to skip taking the final exam.”

There was great relief for some. A number of students went right for the offer and thanked the professor. “Last chance,” said the professor and one more student went. The instructor then handed out the final exam, which consisted of two sentences. “Congratulations,” it read, “you have just received an A in this class. Keep believing in yourself.”¹

More than anything the most important lesson to impart to students is for them to believe that they can be successful. Everyone is capable of learning and this belief can be powerful. God has given us wonderful brains, which enable us to continue to learn and improve. For example, your brain can take in two million bytes of information per second. Teachers need to impart to students that if they use their God-given abilities and put in the needed work, then they will have good results.

As a professor I have found university teaching to be based on a number of quality teaching strategies that are necessary for K-12 teaching as well. Teaching should be

based on research, involve clear expectations, involve quality preparation, be focused on letting students share their knowledge, and have meaningful learning that will help and empower students.

Based on research

Professors are supposed to be knowledgeable about the latest research so it would make sense that their teaching is based on quality research. In teaching content, professors should have a nuanced understanding of the field. Students want their professor to be an expert that can give sage advice and lead quality discussions.

It is important that professors influence in a positive way. In the movie, “God’s Not Dead,”² the plot has different stories that intersect around the main story of a college freshmen taking a philosophy class. The professor of the class makes everyone sign a piece of paper that says, “God is dead,” and put their name on it. The main character in the movie will not do it because he does not want to compromise his beliefs. The professor decides then that the student can try to convince the rest of the class that God is not dead. Through the movie, the reason behind the

professor's anti-Christian beliefs are revealed and the student stays true to his faith.

Professors should never force their beliefs on their students, but can share about who they are and their passions. Christian professors should be able to talk about their faith when students inquire about it and trust that God's Word is powerful to make a difference in the lives of students that might not be Christians.

Besides being knowledgeable, professors need to employ research-based teaching strategies. In one of my journal articles I describe research-based best teaching practices for teaching integrated STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. Some of the strategies that apply to all teaching fields are build on students' prior knowledge, focus on big ideas, concepts, or themes, real world and cultural relevancy, use assessment as part of instruction, employ cooperative learning, ask good questions, and integrate technology.³ Using best practices for teaching enables the most students to be successful.

Let's look for a moment as just a couple of these strategies. Asking quality questions is important. I heard

Jaime Casap, chief education specialist at Google, talk about this when he came to UNLV. He stated that 7% of people in the U.S. can name the first four presidents, but then said that isn't such a bad thing. If you give someone the Internet they can find the answer to this in under 10 seconds, so this isn't necessarily something that people need to know at the top of their head. A better question to pose students would be, "What did the first four presidents agree on or disagree on?" This is a much more higher-level question and takes reasoning skills that are useful to develop.

There are many important questions that are posed in the Bible that are valuable for people to know and keep with them. In Psalm 119:9 the question is posed and answered, *How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.* In order to live according to God's Word we must spend time in it; reading it and discussing it. Bible studies can be a great way to build community and strengthen other Christians.

Another great question to think about and remember the answer to comes from Romans 8:31, *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be*

against us? A great answer to this question comes later in verses 38-39. *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* It is comforting to know that God's love will also be with us and we are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us. With God on our side, no one can defeat us.

Another of the strategies to employ for quality teaching is to focus on big ideas; this too can be done by asking a good focusing question. A few years ago I heard author and professor Ken Bain, talk about his book, *What the Best College Teachers Do*. Because students need to do their part as well, he also has a book called, *What the Best College Students Do*. One of the things that Bain discussed was that professors should have a motivating overarching question that students will answer throughout the semester. This way students can tie everything back to a few main ideas.

For my classes I implement this idea in my syllabus and revisit the question throughout the semester. For

example, in my secondary mathematics methods class the focusing question is, “Many people often say I never got mathematics. How can you teach mathematics to empower all students to learn mathematics deeply?” The statement is written to recognize the fact that students may have negative impressions of mathematics that need to be overcome. The question focuses on quality teaching strategies to help students have positive mathematical experiences to learn it deeply.

Thinking about the Bible, what main focusing question should be posed that ties all the wisdom in the Bible together? There are many variations of a question that could be developed, I believe, as long as they are all on the same theme of how God is our Savior. The Bible is a single story of how sin entered the world and how God made things right again through Jesus’ death on the cross and glorious resurrection. My attempt at a question would be, “All humans are sinful and in need of a Savior. How does God come into our lives and through His love and grace save us from our sins and death?” The Gospel Message is the whole point of the Bible: to bring lost people to Christ so

that they may share in the eternal riches of heaven. What a great free gift! The Bible is the most read book ever and should be by far, because no knowledge is more important for teaching and for all parts of life.

Clear expectations

Professors should have clear expectations for what students have to do for assignments and have clear expectations of what will be occurring each class period. Students do much better when they know what to expect and can only rise to the level of the standards that are set. Without clear expectations, the results that a person gets are really their own fault.

The president of a multi-national corporation was working late at night and standing in front of the paper shredder trying to figure out how to turn it on. The building was empty except for the cleaning staff, and one of the custodians happened to be walking by. The president asked for help and explained that what he was working on was very important and could not wait until the morning. The cleaning person was glad to be of help, turned on the

machine, and fed it into the shredder just as the president said, "I only need you to make one copy."

Unfortunately, this president did not have clear expectations when needed and suffered for it. In the life of a professor, students may complain about their grade or give negative evaluations for the professor if expectations are not clear. In my own teaching I always try to have an agenda with objectives for every class period so that students know before class what we will be focusing on. For assignments I try to have clear guidelines, but also will tell students to do revisions if their work is not good enough. This way, students have a chance to still earn all the points.

Does God provide clear expectations for our life? He does. One of my favorite Bible verses is Micah 6:8, *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* What does it mean to walk humbly with God? Another verse in the Bible provides more description. *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* Ephesians 4:2. The motivation for being able to do this comes from God. *Be kind and*

compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32. We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19

If we were left to do this on our own it would be a disaster. With God's help we can do better, but we are still sinful people so we will not get it right all the time.

However, because of the love God has shown us, we are compelled to show this love to others. God has a clear goal for our lives, to give glory to Him in all that we do and to invite other people to know God and His grace and love. Through God's help and instruction we can strive to meet this goal.

Be prepared

Students prefer professors that are prepared because they make the most out of the class time. If a professor is not prepared then students might feel that the class is not that important and may take it less seriously. Preparation can involve having worthwhile class activities and discussion, anticipating possible student responses, and knowing the material.

The Bible speaks of many ways to be prepared. First

of all, God tells us to be prepared against the schemes of the devil. *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* 1 Peter 5:8. God knows that there is sin and temptation in the world and that there are many lies that are told that draw people away from God's truth. So it is vital to stay in God's Word to be able to discern truth and falsehood, good and evil.

God also tells us to be prepared to share our faith with others. *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.* 1 Peter 3:15. We never know when God will put someone in our lives, where we will be able to be a witness. We can be prepared to share the Gospel message and what this means for our lives.

God tells us to be on watch and be prepared as well for Jesus' second coming. *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

2 Timothy 4:1-2. In order to be prepared, we can stay in

God's Word and encourage others to keep their faith strong because what God promises is trustworthy and will occur. We don't know when the second coming of Jesus will occur. But Christians can rejoice knowing that when Jesus comes again, God will have all preparations made for us and a place in heaven will await. Jesus stated, *"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?"* John 14:2.

Let students share their knowledge

Students come to class with their own unique experiences and knowledge base, which they have to draw on and contribute to the shared knowledge of the class. Professors are wise to build in time so that students can learn from each other. One of the assignments that I like to do in my class is called "expertise sharing". For one of my class periods out of the semester, I let students share something that they have knowledge on related to the main topic of the class. I also build in time in every class for discussion or presentations for students to share their knowledge as well.

Professors who spend every class period lecturing

can keep in mind a lesson that can be learned from the Gettysburg address. At the Gettysburg address Abraham Lincoln was not the main speaker. Edward Everett, a former Massachusetts congressman and president of Harvard gave a two-hour speech because he was considered the best orator at the time. Lincoln spoke for two minutes and no one remembers Everett's speech. It is not always the quantity of what is said, but the quality.

Author and leadership expert, John Maxwell states the following.

"Keep the following in mind:

1. Everyone has something to teach me.
2. Every day I have something to learn.
3. Every time I learn something, I benefit."⁴

We can remember that everyone has been given talents by God that can be developed.

Make learning meaningful

One of the most important things that students want out of a class is that the learning is meaningful for them. Tuition can be expensive and students want to be sure to get their money's worth. Each class should help students in

some way toward their current or future career. Learning is meaningful when it is directly applicable to students' lives.

How does a professor know when he or she has made learning meaningful? John Maxwell provides insight into this with ways that he knows when he has connected with people. He knows he has connected with people when there is:

- extra effort—people go the extra mile
- unsolicited appreciation---they say positive things
- unguarded openness—they demonstrate trust
- increased communication—they express themselves more readily
- enjoyable experiences—they feel good about what they're doing
- emotional bondedness—they display a connection on an emotional level
- positive energy—their emotional “batteries” are charged by being together
- growing synergy—their effectiveness is greater than the sum of the contributions

- unconditional love—they are accepting without reservation.⁵

While this may seem like a lot for a professor to create in a classroom, it would definitely be the sign of a successful semester.

God connects with us through His Word, as well, and the Bible is always applicable. In one of my other books, *Wisdom for Life*, I have collected Bible Verses and Christian quotes for a variety of emotions and purposes in life. The Bible is meaningful for a Christian's whole life. I share just a few of the insights in my book to highlight this.

- Purpose—Christians are motivated by God's love and can only be fulfilled through Christ. *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.* Psalm 42:1.
- Direction—We are better able to make decisions when we spend time in God's Word and talk with other Christians. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.* Proverbs 3:5.

- Hope— Biblical hope is not wishful thinking, optimism, nor self-confidence. It is much more than that. It is looking back to what God has done, continues to do, and will do. *Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.* Hebrews 10:23.
- Worry— Turn to God in prayer to help alleviate worry or fear. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* Philippians 4:8.
- Joy—True joy comes from faith in God and the blessed assurance of heaven. *But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.* Psalm 13:5.
- Encouragement—God is in control. *But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.* Psalm 33:11.
- Love—God’s love is self-sacrificing, never fails, is unchanging, and is not based on our feelings or actions. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish*

but have eternal life. John 3:16.

Help students

The ultimate goal of a professor should be to help students. Professors know that this can occur beyond the classroom. Students often need letters of recommendation or advice after they have finished having a professor for a class. In my own undergraduate degree it was evident that the professors cared for me and wanted to help me. I went to a Christian university, Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP), so I would often see my professors at chapel in addition to sporting events, music events, or just walking around campus. The professors gave good advice not only for the class subjects but also for life in general.

One of the professors that I had, also happened to be my dad. I took a religion class from him one of my semesters and it was an excellent experience. My dad is retired now, but was a long time professor at CSP. My dad was recently honored at a chapel at Concordia University, St. Paul for 45 years in Christian ministry, which included being a pastor and professor.

At the chapel, my sister, Naomi, was able to say a few words about my dad. My dad's primary responsibility as a professor was teaching, though he did some writing as well. One of the things that she said was, "My dad did not publish a lot of articles, but did publish a lot of students." There were many students that had my dad as a professor over the years. It seems like I can go into any Lutheran-Missouri Synod church in the country and someone will speak favorably of my Dad. One of the pastors at the church that I currently attend was a student of my dad's and went into the pastoral ministry upon the suggestion of my dad.

That is the impact that professors should strive to achieve; that they make a difference in the lives of students. Teaching is definitely a calling and God can work great things through the words and actions of teachers. Teachers can make a large difference.

I will end this chapter with a list of things that I learned from my dad, and my mom who was a teacher, as well, for many years. They are things that we can all remember, no matter what our occupation. We all have the

chance to make an impact in lives of others through the guidance and help of God.

- Make the most of each day because each day is a gift from God.
- Live sacrificially so that you can provide for others.
- When you face difficulties in life remember: This too shall pass.
- Take care of what God has blessed you with in life (family and home).
- If something is worth doing, it is worth doing well.
- Give and live generously.
- Keep in mind: Why am I right here? Right now at this time? And how can I show God's love to others?
- Speak confidently and seize opportunity when it comes.
- Be content with what you have because God is all that you really need.

Chapter 3: Service

At many universities, service is supposed to be the smallest percentage of time committed as opposed to teaching and research, which are given a larger percentage of time. Service can involve service to the department, college, or university through committee work or special events. Service can also be done by lending talents and time to schools or organizations.

Professors are considered experts in their field with some getting fees of hundreds of dollars an hour for consulting work or giving advice. However, professors should be willing to help to make the lives of others better even without monetary considerations.

Joshua Bell is a world-renowned violinist who could be paid a \$1,000 a minute for his talents. He received the Avery Fisher Prize as the best classical musician in America. In April of 2007 an experiment was tried, where Bell would play at a subway station in Washington, D.C. for 45 minutes. Just a few days before this, he had sold out a show where tickets averaged around \$100 dollars. At the subway, he played some of the all-time classics of violin music including

“Ave Maria”, and “Chaconne”, one of the most difficult violin pieces to master.

In the time he played at the subway, however, few people stopped to listen to him play. It was not until near the end of his playing that a person noticed who he was. She had no idea what was going on. She knew how famous he was and wondered what he was doing playing in the subway, but she wasn't going to miss it. The woman positioned herself 10 feet away from Bell as if front row, center at a concert. She had a huge grin on her face and stayed there until he was done playing.¹ Though he was recognized by only one person as he played, Bell might have still made the days of other people passing by better and not have known it.

It is an important lesson that we serve not for the recognition but in order to help others and to give glory to God. *But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.* 2 Corinthians 2:14. Through our service we can spread the love of God, which should always be free because God's grace is a free gift.

Service is often considered the least important of a professor's job when it comes to evaluation of his or her job performance, but in the Christian life, service is given top billing. Some of the main points of service that will be discussed in this chapter include: share your abilities; it is okay to say no; it is okay to say yes; serve at work; serve in the community; and serve organizations.

Share your abilities

Professors have unique knowledge bases where they have expertise and should be willing to provide answers to those with questions. Often professors can be focused on the work that they have to do and not look to how they can support others in their work. It is easy to focus on one's own needs and become less aware of the needs of others. But it is more fulfilling when professors look for ways to share their knowledge in a way that will benefit and help others. This can be done in all areas of life and not just work.

Motivated by God's love, we can serve the Lord in all parts of our lives by providing our resources, time, and encouragement to others near and far. 1 Peter 4:10 states, *Each one should use whatever gift you have received to serve*

others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Every one has gifts and unique knowledge bases that they have that they can use to help others.

My dad, a professor and an ordained minister, would always share his abilities by designing church services, leading Bible studies, and being a guest preacher at area churches. Not all professors have an expertise in religion, but all professors can spend time in God's Word. Professors are very capable at reading and presenting information so that it is relatable and understandable. Spending time in God's Word, professors can volunteer at their church in areas where they can lend their expertise from serving on the church board to leading Bible studies.

It is okay to say no

This may seem like a strange heading to have in a chapter on service, but it is an important lesson for professors and for everyone who tries to do too much at work. After my first year as a professor, I was able to attend a week-long professional development for new professors in picturesque Park City, Utah. The week focused on different aspects of teaching, research, and service and was a great

opportunity to network and interact with other new professors. The program was called the STaR program for (Service, Teaching, and Research). The week was lead by experienced professors who have been successful in the field of mathematics education. Playing on the star theme, these professors were dubbed supernovas for their successes already.

At one of the talks, a professor spoke on service. She stated that it is okay to say “no” and had us recite the following line with her, “Thank you for the opportunity, but I’m afraid I have to pass.” If a person is doing too much already, then it does not look good to take on another commitment and possibly do a poor job. There are other people, including professors with more seniority and experience, that might be able to do the work.

This is important because service can be a big time commitment for a professor. It is always a good idea to get a description of the work that will be needed and an approximate time commitment to see if a person has the available time. Professors should strive for balance in their

time commitments so that there is enough time for family, friends, church, and community.

In order to free up more time for service, people can make a to not do list, rather than a to do list. There are many things that can be time wasters that are not productive for oneself or for others. This could include television or surfing the Internet. Professors can be more efficient and maximize their days when they focus on what is the most important, which is family, friends, and community.

It is okay to say yes

With all this being said, there is always the need for doing more service work. In any organization there is the 80/20 rule. This means that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. This is often true for universities and churches. It is important to share with others the God-given blessings of time, talents, and treasure.

Service can also be done through providing monetary donations to charities and to church. Compared to the majority of others, professors are quite rich and have been blessed with resources that they can use to be a blessing to others. Author Brian Fikkert, states how there are

many people in need in the world and how especially in the U.S. we are quite well-off. “We are the richest people ever to walk the face of the earth. Period. Yet, most of us live as though there is nothing terribly wrong in the world...while 40 percent of the world’s inhabitants struggle just to eat every day. And in our own backyards, the homeless, those residing in ghettos, and a wave of immigrants live in a world outside the economic and social mainstream of North America.”² In light of this, professors, myself included, might reconsider a materialistic purchase and instead give more money to church or charities.

Serve at work

Service is a part of a professor’s job and serving at work can be done with Christ’s love as the focus. It is possible to serve others and give God the glory. *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16.* This could involve doing work as a professor, including service work, with high quality. It can also involve being sure to give credit to others for work that is done. Author John Maxwell states the well known phrase, “Great things can

happen when you don't care who gets the credit." However, he takes this one step further. "Great things happen only when you give others the credit."³ Most people want recognition and appreciation for a job they have done. But, by not seeking for oneself, and instead lifting up others who have helped with the work, people will notice the difference. It can build relationships with others and give glory to God.

My grandpa Stohlmann was a model of service at work. He was not only the teacher of a one-room schoolhouse but the janitor, bus-driver, and organist part-time for the church as well. His salary was a meager \$3,000 a year and when there wasn't enough in the church collection, he was paid in chickens. Even though he earned barely enough, he didn't complain. He was happy to do the work that he did in service for the Lord.

The work that professors do can have an impact beyond this life. Through service to others one can make the lives of others better. Helping others to know Christ is the greatest gift that can be given. Reverend Thomas Bayes was a mathematics professor and a minister. He published two works in his lifetime: one mathematical and one theological.

I personally think this is a great combination; publishing in an area of expertise and publishing on the Christian faith and how it relates to life and work. That is the focus of this book, to connect faith to careers. God's love is for all aspects of our life including work.

After Pastor Bayes died in 1761, he became famous for his mathematical work called the Bayes Theorem. It had no practical applications in his lifetime, but today is routinely used in the modeling of climate change and stock market analysis. We never know the impact of our words and our work, but we can trust that God can use it to make the world a better place.

Serve in the community

Professors can serve in the community through workshops or seminars for local schools, speaking to the parent teachers association, school board, Chamber of Commerce, or governmental organizations. Professors also can lend their expertise by speaking to the media or engaging students in service learning projects. A university should be involved with the community and help to improve the community for all citizens. There are often

problems in the community that professors can work to help solve.

My brother, Pastor P.J. Stohlmann, went on a mission trip to Guatemala a few years ago and heard about some of the problems that are occurring there. The locals there say that the country is directed by the unholy trinity: the drug dealers, mafia, and the corrupt government. Also, the men often leave their families. When the group P.J. went with did talks and Bible studies, just the women and children would come. God is still working through many of the women and children to make an impact. A Christian woman in Guatemala told my brother, P.J., a story that shows the power of God's love and forgiveness:

The Christian woman hired a man to dig a well for her. Unfortunately, the man tried to molest her daughter. The woman did not know what to do. Soon after, the man fell down the well he had been digging and broke both of his legs. He ended up having to have one of the legs amputated in the recovery. The woman did not rejoice in his suffering but forgave him and agreed to take care of him. She let him move in because he was in a wheelchair. The woman was

able to witness to this man and he became a Christian and agreed to be baptized. The water in the well that was dug was dirty. The man, though was baptized with the very same water from the well where he had fallen. However, the day they brought up the water for the baptism, it was crystal clear. Though the man had lost his leg, he gained the greatest thing ever, saving faith in Christ.

The woman is a true example of the words of the peace prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where this is hatred, let me show love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

By meeting people's basic needs, it can be an opening to share God's love as stated in Matthew 25:35-36,40. *"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me...The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

There is a dry cleaning store in Portland, Oregon that has helped over 2,000 unemployed workers who couldn't afford dry cleaning. They have a sign on their window that reads, "If you are unemployed and need an outfit clean for an interview, we will clean it for FREE." Similarly, universities and colleges should consider how they can be a blessing to people in the community that are in need.

Serve organizations

Professors can serve organizations that are part of their profession through work on position statements, conference planning, journal editing or reviewing, or in leadership roles. It is a sign of great respect and prestige to be a leader in a top organization or to be an editor in a top journal in the field. It shows that people admire your work and trust that you have and will do a good job. Great leaders are made based on their service to others and should not be judged by their appearance.

It takes even more leadership and vision to create an organization of your own. If you had seen her, your first reaction might not have been respect. You would not think of her as a leader. She was a little over five feet tall. She

couldn't read or write. The clothes she wore were ragged and worn. She had two front teeth missing. She lived alone and left her husband at the age of twenty-nine. Most of the time she worked in small hotels. Every spring and fall she would disappear and come back broke. The year was 1857. More than 300 slaves followed her and just about every abolitionist in New England. The woman was Harriet Tubman.³ She served tirelessly for the cause of others and poured her soul to serve in the work she believed in. She stated, "I would fight for liberty so long as my strength lasted, and if the time came for me to go, the Lord would let them take me." It is this kind of leadership that inspires others to service.

One of the greatest acts of service that people can do with an organization is to serve their country through the armed forces. Ernest Gordon was a former Presbyterian dean of the chapel at Princeton University. He was an agnostic at first, but after spending three years in a Japanese Prisoner Of War (POW) camp during World War II he became a Christian. While in the POW camp he became very ill from cruel treatment by the Japanese soldiers. Two other

prisoners who were Christians took care of Ernest and gave him 24 hour care. Ernest became impressed by the two Christians who kept firm in their faith in spite of the awful circumstance of the camp. Because of this he became a Christian.

Another of the stories Ernest tells from the camp shows that though the soldiers were captured they held together and still fought for each others' survival. One of the Japanese guards said that a shovel was missing and lined up the prisoners. He demanded that the guilty man step forward or he would kill one person at a time until someone confessed. A Scottish soldier stepped forward and said, "I did it." The officer then proceeded to beat the man to death. When the guard was exhausted the prisoners picked up the man's body and their tools. The shovels were recounted and the Japanese soldier had made a mistake; there was no shovel missing.⁴ The Scottish soldier took the blame for something that he didn't do. He was willing to sacrifice his life for someone else.

This soldier's sacrifice reminds us of the ultimate act of service and sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. Jesus

took the blame for something he didn't do and took the world's sins upon Himself. He was willing to sacrifice Himself so that everyone has a chance at life and not death as their sentence. Jesus came to the world to live a life of service and there is no greater act of service than to lay down one's life for another. Isaiah 53:5 states, *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

The Christian fellowship of all Christians is the greatest organization in the world because we have the greatest leader who is the ultimate servant leader; God. There is nothing that compares to serving for Christ. In response to Jesus' great love that was demonstrated from His suffering and death on the cross and glorious resurrection three days later, we can have extreme gratitude and be compelled to show God's love to others through service. We can keep the words of Joshua in our hearts and minds for all aspects of our life. *But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.* Joshua 24:15b.

Conclusion: The World's Greatest Professor

God is the world's greatest professor because He can go beyond what any professor could ever do. The *Journal of Effective Teaching* has an article about what makes an excellent professor.¹ The article states, "The best professors treat students like people, not numbers." God goes beyond this criterion. *But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."* Isaiah 43:1. God even knows us down to the very number of hairs on our head and all of our thoughts.

The article continues, "they (professors) go beyond their call of duty in terms of helping students and holding office hours." God definitely exceeds this criterion. God helps us in our present life. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* Matthew 11:28. He also helps provide for our future life in heaven. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16. God holds office hours 24-7, 365 days a year, because He is always with

us. *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
Matthew 28:20.

The article continues, “they (professors) not only know their material, but they also know how to teach it well.” Jesus is the world’s greatest teacher period. He spent His time on earth teaching others and knew just what to say to help others come to faith in Him. It says multiple times in the Bible, *When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching.* Matthew 7:28. The Bible is God’s Word and God still instructs through it. We can be amazed daily at what we can learn from it.

Next the article states, “they (professors) understand the student and concerns the class may have.” God would score off the charts on this criterion. Psalm 139:1-4 states, *You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.* God knows our needs, wants, and desires and knows what is best for us. We can trust that He wants to

hear from us and teach us how to better follow His will for our lives.

Some of the other characteristics that make God the world's greatest professor are that all of His work is good and accepted, He is all-knowing, He can communicate with anyone, and He only needs to cite himself.

All work is good and accepted

There has never been a professor that has had all submissions accepted and produced quality work every time. It is an important lesson, though, that through feedback, revisions, and encouragement from others professors can produce better work.

God never has to go back into revisions, though, and all of His work is good. When God was creating the world, after each day He looked at what He had made and called it good. After He had finished creating, He looked back at what He had made and called it very good. God did not need to submit His creation to someone else and then wait 4 to 6 months, sometimes longer, to hear back on how He did. God cuts down the review process to a single second. He is the most prolific publisher there ever could be. God did

more in six days than the world's population could do in their lifetimes. And it was very good!

God knew that sin would enter the world causing problems. However, He had a plan that showed for all time that His good conquers any evil. On the cross, Jesus came and defeated death and the devil once and for all. Because of this we are victors in Christ, because Jesus did not stay dead but rose again.

Through God working through Christians, there is still plenty of good in the world. And we know that at the end of time, God will restore His perfect creation with the blessed perfection of heaven. God views us as holy, because He has forgiven all of our sins. In high school, I had a religion teacher that tore up his grade book one religion class. For the people that had not done the assignments for the class, there was great rejoicing. My teacher was trying to make the point that we live by grace not by works so it seemed not right to give a grade for a religion class. We know that in our Christian lives, God does not keep a record of what we have done so we do not have to worry about performing well enough to pass our time on earth. Because

of grace, we know that we have received an A ahead of time. God has given us the free gift of heaven, compelled by this love we strive to live out God's love with others.

This can change our whole outlook on life. When we realize how blessed we are, we start to appreciate everything that we have in life. There is a story about a ninety-two-year-old woman who was being moved to a nursing home after her husband of seventy years passed away. She waited many hours in the lobby as the facility staff made all the arrangements and prepared her room. Because this elderly woman was legally blind, a kind staff member described the room in great detail as the final preparations were being made. "I love it already!" the new patient exclaimed. "How can you love it? You haven't even been in the room yet," the staff member said. And that's when this woman said something truly extraordinary. "That doesn't have anything to do with it. Happiness is something you decide ahead of time."²

Because God is good, there will always be good things to appreciate in the world. We can decide ahead of time to look for and appreciate the many beautiful things

that God has given us. Author and speaker Dale Carnegie once said, “It isn’t what you have, or who you are, or where you are, or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It is what you think about.” As Christians we know that we can dwell on and meditate on God and His saving love. *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* Philippians 4:8.

When our thoughts are focused on the goodness of God, than we will come to appreciate all of the praiseworthy things that exist in God’s creation.

All-knowing

Researchers often have to work for many years to develop their knowledge and expertise. Even then, it can still take researchers a while to figure things out. For four decades Art Fry worked as a researcher in product development for 3M. One day Art was out on the golf course with another researcher Spence Silver, who mentioned a new adhesive he had developed in the lab; microscopic balls of acrylic that formed a weak bond, leaving no residue after

being repositioned. Neither of them could think of a use for it, however, until five years later. Art was singing in the church choir when the piece of paper he was using for a bookmark fell out. This led to the invention of the post-it note.³

God knows everything and all knowledge is at his fingertips. He has never had to wait a few years or even a day to figure something out. It is unfathomable that someone could know that much information and all that has happened and what will happen, but that is why God is God. Even all of the information that is on the Internet is a small sliver of what God knows. Paul marvels at it this way. *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!* Romans 11:33.

In our interactions with others, sometimes it is hard to tell what is truth. Duke professor Dan Ariely has commented on how it can be hard to always trust students. “Over the course of many years of teaching, I have noticed that there typically seems to be a rash of deaths among students’ relatives at the end of the semester. It happens

mostly in the week before final exams and papers are due.”⁴ Another professor, Mike Adams, has done research on this. He has shown that grandmothers are ten times more likely to die before a midterm and nineteen times more likely to die before a final exam. Worse, grandmothers of students who are not doing well in class are at an even higher risk. Students who are failing are fifty times more likely to lose Grandma than nonfailing students.⁵

With God we can always trust His Word and should spend time in it daily. Through studying the Bible, we can become wiser and rely on God’s knowledge to guide our lives. We receive direction and guidance the more we meditate on God’s Word. *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.* James 1:5.

Can communicate with anyone

Professors can be criticized for talking at a level that only those in their field would understand. Excellent professors who are able to make the widest impact are able to communicate with a variety of people and share their

knowledge. Professors should speak in a clear manner with language that is appropriate for their audience.

God is the greatest communicator ever. He knows what each of us need to hear and works to help us in our lives. He wants to meet us where we are at and help grow our relationship with Him. There are a variety of ways that God can speak to us.

God speaks to us through His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 states, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.* Through God's Word we gain insights into many marvelous truths. We are more than conquerors through Christ (Romans 8:37). We can be anxious for nothing (Philippians 4:6). We do not lose heart in our lives because Christ is our strength (2 Corinthians 4:16). The love of Christ compels us in how we live our life (2 Corinthians 5:14). God cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). We can forgive as quickly as we are offended. We give abundantly as we have been given. We boast only in Christ. We trust only in God and we lean solely on His power. These are great aims for our life and truths that God communicates to us everyday that we can take to heart.

God speaks to us through His Son. *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son* Hebrews 1:1-2a. In one of my other books, *The World's Greatest Mathematics Teacher*,⁶ I describe how Jesus is the greatest teacher ever. There has never been a person like Jesus who could communicate well with everyone and teach the Gospel message with such power. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promise of a Savior and His life on earth is a clear example for how people can live theirs. Jesus communicated God's love through relationships and genuine care for individuals.

God speaks to us through His Spirit. Jesus said, *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.* John 14:16-17. The Holy Spirit dwells within all believers and is our guide in our life. We are never alone in this world and the Holy Spirit provides guidance and power for our life. God can communicate directly to us through our thoughts as we

think about how we can better live our lives to give glory to God in all that we do.

God speaks to us through other believers. *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.* 1 Thessalonians 5:11. God's power is at work when Christians share God's Word with other people. We can gain new insights into the Bible and our lives by hearing from the experiences of other Christians. God often will give people circumstances that they can use to help others through advice, encouragement, tough love, or for comfort. When other Christians speak to us, we should listen and properly see how we can apply their experiences with God's Word in our life.

God speaks to us through nature and God's creation. *For 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, so that people are without excuse.* Romans 1:20. The first book in this series, *The World's Greatest Engineer*,⁷ describes how God did something that only He could do; create the world and all that is in it. No engineer could ever come close to this and it did not just

happen by chance or accident. The book goes on to describe the process that engineers go through—ask, imagine, plan, create, and improve—and how these steps relate to the Christian life. God’s creation is evident of a master planner and creator. DNA is a molecule that carries most of the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of living things. For humans, our entire DNA sequence would fill two-hundred 1,000 page telephone directories.⁸ The more DNA is explored the more scientists are finding that each part of the DNA sequence has a purpose.⁹ Through the intricacies of the human body and nature, God communicates that He is a God of the details, loves us, and cares about all of the details in our life. That is no accident; that is God’s plan at work.

God speaks to us through prayer. *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.* Luke 18:1. If Jesus needed to pray, how can we do less? Prayer grows our relationship with God and provides hope and encouragement. *Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.* Psalm 25:5. Through prayer we can talk to God

openly and honestly. God has ways of working responses into our lives.

God speaks to us through music. *Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music.* Psalm 98:4. Many Christian songs are based on Bible verses.

Christians have written music to convey to others what their faith in God means and as another means to convey God's grace and love to others. Music is a gift from God and God can use it to communicate His wisdom to us.

Through all of the ways that God communicates to us, there is no doubt that He is the greatest communicator ever. He is able to reach people where they are and have them hear just the right words, at just the right time. By staying in contact with God through the ways mentioned, we will have guidance and direction for our life.

Only needs to cite himself

In one of the research classes that I teach, I have the students read classic articles in mathematics education. These articles are timeless and have been cited by quite a few researchers. One of the funny things about these articles though is that they do not have many citations contained

within them. The articles were written when mathematics education was in its early stages so there was not a lot of prior research to tie into. If I tried to submit an article for publication now in which I only cited three to five other research publications there would be no chance of publication.

God is much different, however. His Word stands on its own. The Bible is the most widely cited or quoted book ever. God did not need to cite other books to provide significance for the Bible. The Bible is the most significant work of all time and is the measure by which all other Christian works should be based. If you have ever looked at the back of the Bible, you will see that there is no reference list. God did not have to worry about proper APA citation. In the class of life, the Bible is definitely required reading.

John Bruce, a federal judge appointed by Ulysses S. Grant took this to heart. On his deathbed he instructed his daughter to "Fetch the book." Notice that he did not even have to say the Bible. It is the greatest book ever. Bruce told his daughter to turn to the eighth chapter of Romans and said, "Put my finger on these words," and quoted: *For I am*

persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Bruce passed away with his finger on that promise.¹⁰

As Christians we should cite and take to heart God's Word every day of our lives. With God's Word we have everything that we need in life. The prayer of Saint Teresa puts it nicely.

Let naught trouble thee;
Let naught frighten thee;
All Things pass.
God alone changeth not.
Patience can do all things.
Whoever has God, has everything.
God alone sufficeth.

God is the world's greatest professor because He is the best at research, teaching, and service. The most important knowledge in the world is that which is contained in the Bible. It is the only knowledge that has the power to make the biggest difference in the lives of everyone. God is the best at teaching because His Word contains endless wisdom including the life and ministry of Jesus as an example for how we can aim to live our lives. God is the best

at service because He cares for the entire world and always has time for everyone to help them.

There are three orientations that professors and all of us can take towards work. One is that it is a job where you get money and pay the bills. The second is a career with a focus on advancement and prestige. The third is a calling in which our work is rooted in faith as we are working for the Lord. This should be the mindset of professors. Looking to God as the world's greatest professor, professors can use their work to give glory to God in all they do. Anything good thing is from God so it is right to give Him thanks and praise. I end with words from the front page of my dissertation and it is my hope that all professors would see their work as a calling from God.

I would like to thank God who is my all in all, my Savior, Friend, Redeemer, and Lord. I know that any good things that I accomplish in life are from God. And so it is my hope that through my completion of this degree I can help others and that above all God will be glorified.

Soli Deo Gloria

(To God Alone be the Glory)

References

Introduction

1. Gross, N. & Simmons, S. (2009). The religiosity of American college and university professors. *Sociology of Religion*, 70(2), 101-129.

Research

1. Patton, M. (2001). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
2. Jacobs, A.J. (2004). *The know-it-all*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
3. Maxwell, J. (2013). *Sometimes you win-- Sometimes you learn*. New York: Center Street.
4. Journal of Universal Rejected. Retrieved from <http://www.universalrejection.org>
5. Journal of Universal Acceptance. Retrieved from <https://universalacceptance.wordpress.com>
6. Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (2009). *The elements of style: Fiftieth anniversary edition*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.
7. Cain, S. (2012). *Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. New York: Crown.
8. Batterson, M. (2008). *Wild goose chase*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books.
9. Maxwell, J. (2011). *The 5 levels of leadership: proven steps to maximize your potential*. New York: Center Street.
10. Gongwer, T.G. (2011). *Lead...for God's Sake! A parable for finding the heart of leadership*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
11. Answers in Genesis (2014). *Bill Nye debates Ken Ham*. YouTube. www.youtube.com/watch?vz6kgvhG3Akl.

Teaching

1. McKay, H. "Be a Believer to be an Achiever." Pioneer Thinking. <http://www.pioneerthinking.com/achieve/html>

2. Dennis, H. & Konzelman, C. (2014). "God's not dead." Pure Flix Productions.
3. Stohlmann, M., Moore, T., & Roehrig, G. (2012). Considerations for Teaching Integrated STEM education. *Journal of Pre-College Engineering Education Research*, 2(1), 28-34.
4. Maxwell, J. (2013). *Sometimes you win-- Sometimes you learn*. New York: Center Street.
5. Maxwell, J. (2010). *Everyone communicates few connect: What the most effective people do differently*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Service

1. Weingarten, G. (2007). "Pearls before breakfast: Can one of the nation's great musicians cut through the fog of a D.C. rush hour? Let's find out." Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/pearls-before-breakfast-can-one-of-the-nations-great-musicians-cut-through-the-fog-of-a-dc-rush-hour-lets-find-out/2014/09/23/8a6d46da-4331-11e4-b47c-f5889e061e5f_story.html
2. Corbett, S. & Fikkert, B. (2009). *When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor...and yourself*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.
3. Maxwell, J.C. (1998). *The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
4. Gordon, E. (2002). *To end all wars*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan

Conclusion

1. Herman, R. (2011). Letter from the editor-in-chief: What makes an excellent professor? *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 11(1), 1-5.
2. Meyer, J. (2015). *The mind connection*. New York: FaithWords.
3. Batterson, M. (2015). *If*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
4. Ariely, D. (2013). *The honest truth about dishonesty: How we lie to everyone-especially ourselves*. New York: Harper Perennial.

5. Ortberg, J. (2014). *Soul keeping*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
6. Stohlmann, M. (2016). *The world's greatest mathematics teacher*. Seattle, WA: CreateSpace.
7. Stohlmann, M. (2015). *The world's greatest engineer*. Seattle, WA: CreateSpace.
8. Hsien-Hsien, L. (2007). 100 facts about DNA.
www.eyendna.com/2007/08/20/100-facts-about-dna/
9. Answers in Genesis (2013). "Junk Science."
<https://answersingenesis.org/genetics/junk-dna/junk-science/>
10. Boreham, F.W. (1994). *Life Verses*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.